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FICTIONAL STORYTELLING IN THE MEDIEVAL EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND BEYOND

Edited by

CAROLINA CUPANE & BETTINA KRÖNUNG

BRILL

Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond

Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World

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Persian Folk Prose", in Ch. Melville and G.R. van den Berg (eds.), Shahnama *Studies II* (Brill 2012); "Orality in Medieval Persian Literature", in K. Reichl (ed.), *Medieval Oral Literature* (De Gruyter 2012); "Re-Writing the Episode of Alexander and Candace in Medieval Persian Literature", in M. Stock (ed.), *Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages: Transnational Perspectives* (Toronto UP 2015) and an edited volume *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World: Patterns of interaction across the centuries* (Brill 2015).

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INTRODUCTION

Medieval Fictional Story-Telling in the Eastern Mediterranean (8th–15th centuries AD): Historical and Cultural Context

> "Madame," he said, "I have been telling you a story. Stories have been told as speech has existed, and sans stories the human race would have perished, as it would have perished sans water"
>
> KAREN BLIXEN, *Last Tales*: *The Cardinal's first tale*

In the Middle Ages, the Mediterranean was the natural connector between the people and cultures around its shores, a great space in which a lively multicultural interchange of goods and luxury items has always taken place. However – unlike in antiquity when political and economic unity was the rule – the medieval Mediterranean was a shared space, disputed between various Christian and Muslim powers. Byzantium and the different Islamic potentates alternately seizing power over time were the main players in the struggle for maritime hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean, whereas the naval dominance of the Muslims in the western part was almost unquestioned.[1] From the 11th century onwards, however, Latin naval powers, Italian and Catalan, gradually prevailed, first in the western Mediterranean, but later also in the eastern, thus reducing Byzantine and Muslim presence there. The shifting balance of power, alongside the resulting conflicts, doubtless caused a slowdown of trade in the Mediterranean area, but never disrupted the existing networks.[2] Of course, due to historical contingencies, the contacts, which followed the same maritime routes already established in Antiquity, developed with variable intensity. The frequency seems to have reached a peak from the 10th century onwards, when a lively diplomatic and commercial exchange between the

1 Fahmy, *Naval Organisation*.

2 On this concept see Valérian, "Medieval Mediterranean"; see also Coulon/Valérian, "Introduction" in Coulon/Picard/Valérian, *Espaces et Réseaux* I, pp. 9–18.

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Abbasid Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire flourished,[3] after the latter had succeeded in regaining some of the territories (Crete, large parts of Syria) previously conquered by the Muslims.[4]

The exchanged goods which, for the most part, belonged to the realm of court culture, played an essential role in shaping the relationships between the Christian-Byzantine and Islamic worlds. Whether they were meant to formulate feelings of superiority over the respective rival or of admiration toward a superior culture,[5] luxury objects, usually traveling in the baggage of diplomatic envoys,[6] served not only as political communication. By transferring iconographic motifs and stylistic features, as well as technical achievements back and forth across the shared sea, they also broadened the knowledge horizon of both sender and receiver, thus making possible cross-cultural exchange, beyond the political and confessional divides.

Sure enough, the movement of luxury items, whether offered as gifts, captured as spoils or sold as trade goods, was not confined within the Mediterranean space, rather they traveled along pathways that extended far beyond it, spanning Central and Northern Europe as well as Baghdad, and even further into Central Asia and China, including the well documented maritime route to the Indian ocean.[7] This never-ending movement allowed a common visual language to arise, which explains the similarities such luxury objects share, most notably regarding ornamental and iconographic features.[8]

Far beyond its direct involvement as a partner in political and diplomatic dialogue, Byzantium always held a very special position within the connected Mediterranean space, first and foremost because of its geographical position which let it function as a contact point and a hub for every kind of fine artifact (many of which were produced by the Byzantines themselves), being itself at

3 See Drocourt, "Christian-Muslim diplomatic relations"; Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab diplomacy".

4 Canard, "Byzantium and the Muslim World"; Felix, *Byzanz und die islamische Welt*.

5 See on this topic Walker, *The Emperor and the World*, who characterizes the varying meanings the exchange of objects between Byzantium and Islam had over time with the concepts of "emulation, appropriation, expropriation, parity".

6 On both the political and economic meaning of gift exchange see Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange"; see also Hilsdale, "Gift".

7 On the Byzantine trade connections to India in the early Byzantine period, see Pigulewskaja, *Byzanz auf den Wegen nach Indien*.

8 See Hoffmann, "Pathways of Portability", pp. 16, 26; cf. Grabar, "Shared Culture".

the same time the longed for destination of countless travelers, merchants, and adventurers.[9]

The Mediterranean, however, was not only a space of conflict and merchandise: artifacts and technology were not the only goods that circulated across the Mediterranean. In this multilingual and multi-cultural zone, characterized by the coexistence of a wide array of literary languages, a broad market for ideas, narrative subjects, motifs and, more generally, knowledge, was also available. Admittedly, this kind of cultural mobility is far more difficult to identify, which partly explains the lack of scientific attention it has experienced for a long time.[10] Only in the last decade, an increasing popularity of transcultural studies provided a variety of new, both theoretical and paradigmatic approaches in this regard.[11] To be sure, objects are concrete, they continue to exist and therefore can be physically touched; the evidence they offer is both visible and tangible, whereas literary motifs are immaterial, unsteady entities, free floating across space and time, and thus difficult to grasp.[12] And yet, artifacts and narrative motifs, be they transmitted in written or oral form, sometimes speak a similar language. What is more, visual culture very often parallels the literary one, whose reverse image it is, insofar as the literature often stays behind the picture as its actual source of inspiration. A most impressive example of this kind of interaction is the tale of Alexander's marvelous flight as told in version *beta* of the *Life of Alexander*, which was to become a favorite subject in monumental art, as well as in luxury objects.[13] In this respect, too, Byzantium functioned as a distributor and recycler, in a way, of exotic eastern narrative material, which it forwarded to Western Europe.[14]

Still, scattered, mostly oral, narrative motifs were not the only immaterial goods which traveled westwards and eastwards across the Mediterranean: whole stories, even books made the journey too. They all belong to what the

9 See Ciggaar, *Western Travelers*; Majeska, *Russian Travelers*; Izzedin, "Quelques voyageurs"; still useful is Ebersolt, *Constantinople byzantine*.

10 On the notion of "cultural mobility", see Greenblatt, "Cultural Mobility", esp. pp. 1–23, where medieval cultural mobility, however, is not taken into account.

11 See e.g. von der Höh/Jaspers/Oesterle (eds.), *Cultural Brokers*; Mersch/Ritzerfeld (eds.), *Lateinisch-griechisch-arabische Begegnungen*; Borgolte/Dücker (eds.), *Integration und Desintegration*.

12 On the great mobility of narrative motifs see Cupane, "Bisanzio e la letteratura della Romania", esp. 43–45; see also more recently Yiavis, "Persian Chronicles, Greek Romances", esp. 38–41.

13 **See** Kalavrezou "Marvelous Flight", as well as the chapter by U. Moennig in this volume p. 170.

14 On the centrality of Byzantium in the transmission of literary motifs, see. Capaldo, "Il ruolo della leggenda".

Iranologist Angelo Piemontese has aptly called "the shared library of the Middle Ages", and which can be understood as a literary counterpart to the space labeled as the *oikoumene* in Cosmas Indicopleustes' world map (see the front cover of this volume).[15] This library included, along with narrative literature of eastern (mostly India or Persia) and Greek origin, also philosophical and scientific texts. They were translated from Greek to Middle Persian or Syriac, then to Arabic between the 6th and 10th centuries AD, and later (10th–13th centuries AD) from Arabic or Hebrew back into Greek,[16] but above all into Latin, and successively into the different Romance, Germanic and Scandinavian vernaculars. Together, these works constitute the body of a Mediterranean literature, which, due to the "tenacity in literary studies of the nation" has up to now hardly been studied or even identified as such.[17] Admittedly, from the field of fictional literature on which the present volume's focus lays, just five to six items from this body of literature have been handed down to us. This paucity, however, is more than compensated for by their wide dissemination. Actually, it can safely be claimed that, during the Middle Ages, the tales included in the aforementioned library – such as the *Life of Secundus*, the *Book of Ahiqar*, the *Alexander romance*, the tale collections *Kalila wa Dimna* and *Sindbad*, the story of *Barlaam and Ioasaph* – were common intellectual property of all peoples and cultures located around the Mediterranean shores, at the crossroads of Europe, Northern Africa and Asia. As did luxury objects, they also reached far beyond it, as far as to the northern European countries, and to Central Asia, China and India. Whatever the ultimate origin of the individual tales may have been, all of them were appropriated (and sometimes even expropriated) by different user communities and became reshaped in different languages in order to match different ideologies and to meet new tastes and cultural expectations.

A distinctive feature of such 'Mediterranean' works is the peculiar form of transmission and dissemination, insofar as they all constitute, as it were, text "networks", producing entangled versions of the same basic stories with a marked tendency to proliferation and flexibility. A dazzlingly wide spectrum of lexical variation together with a free, unbiased way of dealing with the content does not allow us to reconstruct or even to assume the existence of an original

15 Piemontese, "Narrativa medioevale persiana e percorsi librari".

16 For an impressive example see Mavroudi, *Oneirocriticon*.

17 Kinoshita, "Mediterranean Literature", p. 30. However, for a new approach see Akbari/Mallette (eds.), *A Sea of Languages*, where an attempt is being made to erase traditional boundaries of nationally shaped disciplines in favor of considering medieval Mediterranean literature as a large, comprehensive whole.

fixed text. It is therefore "virtually impossible" – as Daniel Selden puts it – "to chart with any certainty either their historical development or their full global diffusion".[18]

All the aforementioned texts are presented and analysed in the present volume, alongside other tales, which originated in specific contact zones – such as the borderland between the Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate or Frankish Greece[19] – and had a more limited circulation. Our primary aim is to give an overview of the relevant narrative material, in order to highlight both the rich and variegated world of medieval story-telling and the fundamental unity of the medieval Mediterranean world, despite the existing linguistic, confessional and not least cultural diversities.

In selecting the works to be included in this volume, we primarily focused on Byzantine narrative literature as a point of reference. In this field, we aimed at providing an outline of the existing literary production in as detailed a manner as possible. Of course, since narrativity is a basic feature affecting in some degree almost every kind of literary expression, here too priorities have been set, as we discuss in more detail below.

As for the eastern narrative tradition, we have chosen to restrain ourselves within the extremely rich and variegated Arabic, Syriac and Persian literatures focusing on texts which display a high degree of interconnectivity with the Byzantine ones. For this reason, only those works directly or indirectly reflecting such an intercultural network will be dealt with.

Middle Persian literature is, in a way, a special case. On the one hand, it does not belong geographically to the Mediterranean area which constitutes our frame of reference. On the other hand, Medieval Persia is not only the true home of several tales which entered Byzantine literature via Arabic and Syriac translations, but also produced celebrated love romances that were influenced by the Ancient Greek novelistic tradition, and may have, in turn, influenced late Byzantine vernacular romances. They have therefore been included in this volume.

A few words should be said about the organization of the selected material. Since both a chronological division and an arrangement by literary genres proved impossible, we opted for a thematic organization. We are, of course, fully aware that other arrangements would also be possible. Several tales, which are dealt with in this volume under different headings, would perfectly

18 For the concept of text networks see Selden, "Mapping the Alexander Romance", esp. 41–50, quote p. 42; see also id., "Text Networks", esp. 12–18.

19 On this issue, see Cupane, "Noi e gli altri"; the concept of contact zone has been coined by Pratt, *Imperial eyes*, p. 4, cf. ead., "Arts of the contact zone".

fit the category love and adventure, for these are basic elements of storytelling. Thus, our main concern was pointing to the distinctive and peculiar features of different texts, which otherwise belong together in both topic and stylistic refinement. To give but one example, the tales of *Florios* and *Imperios* tell a story of the love, loss, searching and reunion of two youths of royal descent, as *Livistros*, *Velthandros* and *Kallimachos* also do. In fact, none would contest that original works and adaptations of western stories are linked and share several common elements. On the other hand, the very fact that some authors preferred to assimilate and adapt foreign stories implies that they were exposed to them – which, from the outset, seems to be more probable in Western dominated areas, where cultural transfer had greater opportunities to take place. One could also assume that at least some of the adaptations point to different communities of receivers than the works doubtless addressed to the Constantinopolitan aristocracy, as *Livistros* and *Velthandros* were. From this perspective, it makes better sense, in our opinion, to consider the *War of Troy*, an adaptation of the huge *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de St-Maure, together with other adapted texts such as *Florios* or the *Old Knight*, than with the Troy stories, which draw exclusively from ancient and Byzantine material, as for example the *Byzantine Iliad.* Having said this, we concede that organizational principles *per se* are modern constructs. Yet, they are necessary when aiming at uncovering lines of development as well as convergences and divergences in the literary process.

The subject matters of the selected tales encompass a dazzling variety of topics: love and adventures are just as common as epic-heroic themes, spiritual and edifying subject matters, mythological stories and not least animal tales. This variety in terms of content is paralleled by a similar 'generic' multiplicity, ranging from what we would now label as romance to heroic epic, (fictional) biography, didactic narratives through to animals fables. However, it should not be overlooked that the very concept of genre, in the Middle Ages, had an entirely different meaning then it has today, hybrid forms being the rule more than the exception.[20]

Linguistic level and style also vary from work to work, not necessarily depending on the 'generic' category the compositions belong to. Even between different versions of the same work conspicuous differences are often apparent, since they usually originated in different places at different times.

20 On the most debated issue of genre awareness in the Middle Ages, with particular reference to Byzantium, see Mullett, "The Madness"; on generic intermingling see Agapitos, "Mischung der Gattungen"; Id., "New genres"; Moennig, "Literary Genres".

Yet, some constant patterns can be observed. Prose writing dominates in (in its widest sense) biographical narratives, edifying tales and story collections (*Secundus, Aesop, Alexander, Barlaam, Kalila wa Dimna, Syntipas*), with strong variations in linguistic sophistication between all of them. Medieval love and adventure romances, but also heroic poetry, in turn are usually verse compositions (rhymed or unrhymed), although the authors of Hellenistic romances, who first introduced fictional narrative in Greek literature, and provided the model for late Byzantine romance writing, employed prose. Here again, very different levels of style and language can be found.

The texts selected in this volume are but a small sample of a virtually endless whole. Certainly, they could not claim to cover the entire spectrum of "Medieval storytelling in the eastern Mediterranean and beyond". The word 'fictional' appearing in the title is crucial. This volume is exclusively concerned with fictional narrative, Hagiographic or historical writing would go beyond its scope and are therefore not included, although both genres certainly abound in features modern readers would call fictional.[21] However, the understanding of what was or was not fictional, in the Middle Ages, is very different to our own.[22] This should make us cautious in labelling works as fictional or factual when referring to medieval evaluation criteria. This is not to say, of course, that people, in the Middle Ages, were not able to distinguish between fact and fiction, either in reality or in literature. It only means that the boundaries separating the two, at that time, were often blurred, and sometimes even indistinguishable. Actually, there are enough elements showing that medieval audiences took several accounts (e.g. about supernatural visions, strange, bizarre and marvelous phenomena) we would locate in the realm of fiction at face value, just as they had no doubts either about the historicity of the Trojan war (as it was told in poetry) or about the veracity of Alexander's incredible experiences at the end of the world, a place which was inscribed in geographical world maps as belonging to the 'real world', as the front cover of the present volume strikingly shows. Many of the heroes whose adventures have been recounted for centuries across the Mediterranean to the delight of countless readers and listeners exist in a grey area between fact and fiction. In fact, it is

21 On fictional elements in hagiographical texts and the way the original audience may have received them, see Roilos, "Phantasia", pp. 21–26, as for historiography, see Lilie, "Reality and Invention".

22 See the discussion on this topic by Kaldellis, "The Emergence of Literary Fiction"; on the differences between Byzantine and western understanding of fictionality, see Agapitos, "In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands", to be read alongside Cupane, "Una passeggiata".

impossible to ascertain to which extent medieval audiences considered figures such as Aesop, Secundus, Barlaam and Joasaph to be real persons or literary figures. As for the latter, at least, opinions diverged. While Barlaam and Ioasaph were generally deemed to be real saints, and therefore worthy of being included in the *Synaxarium* of the Orthodox Church (a collection of short lives of saints arranged in the order of their anniversaries), to the anonym author of the lexicon falsely attributed to the historian John Zonaras, on the contrary, their edifying story was as an example par excellence of literary fiction (*plasma*).[23]

The chronological nucleus of this volume covers the period between the 11th to the 15th century. In this regard, too, our choice is based on the specific literary situation in Byzantium, where fictional writing in its proper sense is not to be found until the late 11th century. This period, though, is not to be taken as a strict parameter. Indeed, jumping back to the late Hellenistic era is unavoidable when dealing with Byzantine literary texts whose strong ties with the ancient tradition first began weakening in the 14th and 15th centuries, as the empire's territorial extent dwindled, western influence grew and new cultural goods became available. For example, it is impossible to understand the form and meaning of the Byzantine revival of love fiction in the 12th century without considering the Hellenistic romances on which the authors rely. One cannot overestimate the refined skills they display molding the motifs and episodes they took from the narrative tradition of Antiquity, so they expressed and reflected contemporary concerns, as Ingela Nilsson shows in her chapter.

The classical tradition was relevant to eastern literatures (particularly Armenian, Syriac Persian and Arabic) as well, not only in the fields of natural sciences and philosophy.[24] Novelistic literature also belongs to the legacy of Antiquity bequeathed to eastern cultures. The most eminent representative is certainly the fictional biography of *Alexander the Great*, whose variegated Byzantine and Modern Greek afterlife is traced in the chapter by Ulrich Moennig. The work very soon spread eastwards, was first translated into Armenian (supposedly as early as the 5th century) and reached the Syriac, Arabic and later Persian literary traditions from the 7th century onwards, as described in the chapters by Faustina Doufikar-Aerts and Julia Rubanovich.

Alexander therefore made the 'oriental' journey both as a real person – as everyone knows – and as the protagonist of a celebrated book; still, he was not the only one. *Secundus*, the pagan philosopher who dared to oppose imperial power, never left Greece, yet the tale of his persistent silence, even on threat of

23 On this topic, see the chapter by R. Volk in this volume, p. 417 and note 68.

24 See on this topic, (with particular focus on the Arabic translation movement in the Abassid period) Gutas, *Greek thought*.

death, also became popular in a Christian context. It spread widely, entering the Syriac speaking world from the 5th, and later (9th to 11th centuries) into the Arabic world. Admittedly, the tale of *Secundus* appears to have bypassed Byzantium; at least it did not leave any direct traces. Nevertheless, its conspicuous influence on the *Book of Sindbad* fully justifies its inclusion in this volume. Oliver Overwien reconstructs in his chapter the stages of the ancient tale's travel eastward.

A no less famous hero – or rather anti-hero – is represented in the *Vita Aesopi*, a fictional biography, whose narrative reaches back into the 2nd century AD, and which was reworked later in manifold Byzantine, and even post-Byzantine adaptations. As Grammatiki Karla shows in her chapter, the popularity of this work was ensured not only by its dual benefits of edification and entertainment, but first and foremost by its particular openness in form and content. However, unlike the *Alexander Life* and the *Life of Secundus*, the fame of *Aesop* was almost entirely limited to the Greek speaking world. Only a few traces can be found in Syriac and Arabic fable collections ascribed to the Koranic wise man Luqman, who was given the legendary traits of Aesop from the early Islamic period.[25]

Hellenistic love romances rank among the earliest consciously fictional narratives which are not rooted in Greek mythology, as the brilliant presentation in the introductory chapter by Massimo Fusillo illustrates. Alongside their impact on Byzantine narrative literature, they also had a noteworthy afterlife in Persian literature. It has been proven beyond any doubt that the 11th century fragmentary verse romance *Wāmiq o Adrā* derives from the (largely also lost) Greek novel of *Metiochos and Parthenope*.[26] As the chapter of Julia Rubanovich shows, however, the relationship between the love narratives of the two cultures appear to have been one of mutual reciprocity and exploitation of common themes rather than a more straightforward one of direct giving-and-taking.

Intercultural dialogue, however, is bi-directional, the journey from East to West was likewise well frequented. After having appropriated the fundamental works of ancient philosophy and science, which it was to hand back to the stirring western cultures, the Islamic world, in turn, bequeathed Byzantium with two seminal books belonging to a genre hitherto unknown in Byzantine literature, the frame tale collection. Both *Kalila wa Dimna* and the *Book of Syntipas the Philosopher* fit into this genre, and feature an overall frame story, in which many others are embedded, thus displaying an extremely refined and, at the

25 On this still scarcely investigated topic, see Heller, "Lukman".

26 See Hägg/Utas, *The Virgin*; Hägg, "Oriental reception".

same time, complex narrative structure with several, skillfully intertwined diegetic levels. As Bettina Krönung and Ida Toth show in their contributions, these story collections originated in India (*Kalila wa Dimna*) and Persia (*Syntipas*) respectively. The latter found its way to Byzantium late in the 11th century via a Syriac template circulating in the area of Melitene (today Malatya, Turkey), a city disputed for centuries between Byzantines and Arabs (and later Seljuks). *Kalila wa Dimna*, on the contrary, – which was produced in Abbasid Baghdad by the 8th century – is a direct Vorlage for the Byzantine *Stephanites and Ichnelates*, and itself goes back to a lost version of the Indian *Pañcatantra* via a (also lost) Persian adaptation. Although a fragment of an earlier translation is extant, the text as a whole was first translated into Greek by Simeon Seth in the late 11th century, at the request of the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118). The attraction of both tale collections among members of the Byzantine ruling class, and even the emperor himself can be easily explained by the clever mixture of didactic and delightful contents they display, as well as by the possibility for both to be read as pieces of advisory literature, (*specula principis*), a genre which was deeply rooted in Byzantine literary tradition.

The same holds true for the so called 'spiritual tale' of *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, a piece of world literature whose ultimate origin goes back to India, and is a Christian adaptation of the Life of Buddha. As *Kalila wa Dimna* and *Syntipas*, the tale was first translated into Middle Persian (Pahlavi), and then into Arabic. However, it entered Byzantium, as Robert Volk shows, via a Georgian translation, transposed into Greek by the Georgian monk Euthymios at the Holy Mountain of Athos, probably around the year 1000 AD. From there, through a Latin translation, the tale was to start a triumphal journey right across Europe and far beyond, from Iceland to Ethiopia and from Portugal to Russia.

In addition to the transfer of books and ideas between the Byzantine and the Islamic worlds, a vivid cultural exchange also took place in the border area of Anatolia and northern Syria. Here, the cross cultural contact appears in the form of a creative, independent exploitation of common subject matters. The poem *Digenis Akritis*, a hybrid text whose generic categorization is highly controversial (in fact belonging to both the epic and romance narrative world), as Corinne Jouanno shows in her chapter, is paralleled by comparable Arabic heroic tales about holy warriors fighting against the enemies of Islam, albeit in reverse. As Claudia Ott rightly suggests, the romantic and ultimately a-historic spirit of the poem may be plausibly understood as an implicit criticism of the "bloody, brutal and humorless way of life of the Islamic holy warriors". The crucial role of orality within the transmission history of these texts becomes particularly obvious in Ott's chapter, where recitation performances in past and present times are linked together. Of course, reading aloud and

performative storytelling were the main paths of transmission of fictional literature in the whole medieval Mediterranean, as Carolina Cupane and Panagiotis Roilos demonstrate in their chapters.

From the 12th century onwards the balance of power in the Mediterranean was compromised by the increased political and economic power of western European countries, firstly by the Italian maritime republics, and finally disrupted by the Crusades. By the 14th century, it can safely be said that the Mediterranean had become a Latin trading space, with the Byzantines nothing more than junior partners, whose mere existence depended, at times, on food supply from the West. Cheaper products from western manufacturing such as pottery, textiles, and objects d'art, flooded the Byzantine market slowly supplanting local products.[27] This shift in productivity is faithfully mirrored in the vernacular literature of that time. Here, too, the literary market is dominated by a range of items of western provenance. Highly popular love and adventure tales, such as the *War of Troy* by Benoît of St-Maure, the romances of *Floire et Blancheflor*, *Pierre de Provence*, and *Apollonios King of Tyrus* were translated from French or Italian into Greek vernacular, most probably (but by no means exclusively) in peripheral zones no longer belonging to the Byzantine Empire. Kostas Yiavis analyses in his chapter the manifold ways such foreign imports were recast in order to fit the different cultural backgrounds of new audiences.

The literary scene of the Byzantine capital itself, however, did not remain unaffected by the new (enforced) openness to western literary influences. The so called 'original romances' (*Livistros and Rodamne, Velthandros and Chrysanza, Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*) – original insofar as the anonymous authors did not adapt foreign templates – used several motifs from medieval French love allegory, first and foremost the idea of the judgement at the court of Love. As Carolina Cupane shows in her chapter, the realm of Love the protagonists enter in a dreamlike vision functions as a peculiar space of the marvelous, a kind of secular otherworld modelled upon the Christian one as its reverse image.[28]

The impact of new literary subject matter from the West in late Byzantine vernacular literature is paralleled by the innovative way time-honored mythological themes such as the Trojan war were handled. Both the *Achilleid* and the

27 On the decline of Byzantine economy in its final centuries (13th–15th), see Laiou/ Morrisson, *Byzantine Economy*, pp. 182–89; ead., "Byzantine Economy", pp. 1156–64; Matschke, "Late Byzantine urban Economy", esp. pp. 474–78.

28 On the links with vision literature from the middle Byzantine period, see Cupane, "Heavenly City".

Byzantine Iliad drew their material not from the Homeric poems themselves, but from Middle Byzantine chronicle writing (mostly the chronicle by Constantine Manasses), and modelled it, as Renata Lavagnini points out, according to the patterns of the Palaiologan vernacular romances. Although neither seems to be indebted to the western narrative tradition, the *Achilleid*, at least, is certainly well acquainted with western fashion and attire, albeit displaying, at the same time, a conspicuous competence concerning Byzantine military techniques. This mixture of traditional and innovative thematic and/or motivic elements is undeniably a typical feature of Late Byzantine vernacular writing.

A further, no less important characteristic is the overall tendency to hybridization that affects the literary production in the vernacular to a much higher degree than the learned one. This trend brought forth a creative contamination between different genres, ultimately leading to the emergence of several *sui generis* works.[29] Narrative is always part of the mixture, but its extent varies, ranging from a high share to a superficial colouring.

The *Consolatory Fable about Bad and Good Fortune* and the learned poem *On Chastity* by Theodore Meliteniotes, for instance, draw in many ways from the pool of the romance tradition, from which they both take several motifs and features (for instance, the motif of pilgrimage and search, the description of palaces and delightful places). However, they combine it with both the discourse of French didactic and love allegory and that of apocryphal writings and hagiographic works describing *katabaseis* (descents) to the Underworld by focusing on the individual, dream-like experience of the narrating I, and featuring only personifications of abstract ideas as *personae dramatis*.[30]

The *Book of Birds* and the *Entertaining Tale of the Quadrupeds*, both dialogic poems with animals as acting *personae* and with a pronounced satirical undertone, may be reminiscent of eastern dispute poems, but draw at the same time on the learned Byzantine tradition of *progymnasmata* (fore-exercises). In these works, narrative elements are almost completely withdrawn, not least due to both their dialogic structure and satirical gesture.[31]

All of these works could indeed reasonably be labelled fictional narratives. Thus, one could make a claim for them to be included in this volume. On the

29 On this kind of 'generic' intermingling, see Moennig, "Literary Genres".

30 Both works are briefly discussed in the chapter on Original Romances by C. Cupane as witnesses of the reception history of the romances, pp. 118–19.

31 For general information on the texts, see Beck, *Volksliteratur*, pp. 173–75; for parallels with eastern (Arabic) literature Prinzing, "Rangstreitliteratur"; for a slightly different opinion see Moennig, "Literary Genres", pp. 175–79.

other hand, their very hybridity, together with the mostly subordinate role of the narrative element – and not least the limited space available – were strong arguments against them. They have therefore not been taken into account.

The wide dissemination through space and time of exemplary literature, as represented by the frame tale collections, and other edifying narrations, both of Greek and Eastern origin, such as the (fictional) *Lives* of *Aesop*, *Secundus*, *Barlaam* and, first and foremost, of *Alexander*, stands in sharp contrast to the conspicuous isolation of vernacular Greek romances. These mostly have a flimsy manuscript tradition, and in some cases have been handed down through only one manuscript. There are exceptions, of course: *Digenis Akritis, Livistros and Rodamne,* for instance, do exist in many different versions. They were recast linguistically at different times – the first was even put into rhyme or prose – and in these new forms were still read well into the 17th century. *Imperios and Margarona* and the *Tale of Apollonios* are, in a way, special cases, for they are the only two vernacular romances which, in a rhymed version, made the leap from manuscript into chapbook (first printed in Venice 1553 and 1524 respectively, and reprinted until the end of the 18th century), what ensured them enduring popularity. Still, their popularity was restricted to the narrow milieu of the Greek speaking, uneducated subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and lacked any broad cultural influence. They are certainly not comparable to the rich and articulated reception of Persian love romances, which inspired original reworkings in several eastern languages, let alone with the enormously influential books mentioned above. This, alongside the vagaries of manuscript tradition, partly depends on historical contingencies, but also on the specific conditions under which the heirs of Byzantine cultural tradition were obliged to live. Not least, it also has to do with the low esteem the vernacular enjoyed, even among the Greek intellectual elite itself. This small, but high influential social class, totally identified with classicizing, learned language, and felt nothing but disdain for the *Barbarograeca*, as vernacular Greek was called. This may explain why, unlike Arabian Folk Epic, which is a lively, performed popular tradition in Arabic speaking countries even today, Byzantine vernacular epic and love romances have almost entirely disappeared from the collective memory of modern Greece dwindling to just the subject of academic research, and even then a neglected one.

It is the one major concern of this volume to give medieval Greek storytelling the place it deserves within the Mediterranean narrative *koine*, an integral part of which it doubtless is. The second, no less important goal is to uncover the thick intertextual web in which the individual texts are weaved by giving an overall view, as complete and accurate as possible, of the relevant narrative material. This is the only way to recover, at least in part, the endless

whisper of the countless stories once encompassing the entire Mediterranean world.[32]

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32 We would like to express our deepest thanks to all of our dedicated contributors who took on the difficult and time-consuming task of revising their essays again and again, in order to meet our requirements, and who patiently suffered our innumerable communications, updates, and urgings.

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PART 1

Of Love and Other Adventures

CHAPTER 1

Mapping the Roots: The Novel in Antiquity

Massimo Fusillo

1 Love and Adventure

The few allusions to the Greek novel in ancient authors are characterized by a fully negative connotation: Philostratus, Persius, and Julian the Apostate do not actually describe a genre, but qualify this literature as ephemeral, entertaining and superficial.[1] As a matter of fact the ancient novel never received any rhetorical codification, never entered the realm of canonical and classical forms, and remained for centuries, even in modern times, more or less a marginal and minor genre, quite successful but often considered dangerous from a moral point of view, until, we might say, the Romantic revolution.

Starting from these traces we could come to the conclusion that the ancient novel was a phenomenon similar to the modern *paralittérature,* or entertaining literature, or *Trivialliteratur.* It is a parallelism that should be made with several cautions, first because the ancient world did not have anything similar to culture industry or mass media, and second because repetition and imitation were not considered a negative factor in ancient, medieval and pre-modern cultures.[2] Moreover, it is certainly impossible to give an abstract definition of para-literature, just as it is impossible to give an abstract definition of literature itself.

Nevertheless there are some features of the Greek novel, especially in its first phase, that can recall the category of para-literature: the repetition of *topoi* and narrative situations, the basic and simple psychological characterization; the absolute dominance of sentimentalism; the setting in the highest social level; the consolatory character of the happy ending mandated by the genre; the frequent use of summaries and recapitulations in order to help the public follow the complex plot.[3] Everybody can recognize in these features similarities with modern feuillettons, soap operas, TV series, and so on. But we must always remember some crucial points. Psychological characterization is, for example, a typically modern aesthetic category, that cannot be

1 Philostratus, *Epistles* 66; Persius, *Satires* 1.134; Julian the Apostate, *Epistles* 89b, 301b.

2 See Fusillo, "Il romanzo antico come paraletteratura".

3 See Couégnas, *Introduction*.

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mechanically applied to classical texts. Moreover, the Greek novel cannot be treated like a single, homogeneous macro-text: there are significant differences and nuances between the various works and authors. Generally speaking, we can distinguish between a first phase, popular and sentimental, which can be quite easily labelled as para-literature (Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus), and a second one, more complex from a structural and rhetorical point of view, strictly linked to the Second Sophistic, which played a crucial role in the history of the Byzantine and modern novel (Achilles Tatius, Longus Sophistes, Heliodorus).[4] But even within those two periods there are important differences, for example between the more refined, nuanced Chariton, rich of innovative variations and psychological insights, and the more elementary Xenophon of Ephesus, totally focussed on the evolution of the plot. And of course we cannot forget the other subgenres of the ancient novel we will deal with later. To sum up: the label of para-literature can be a good starting point to understand the role of the ancient novel in the system of literary genres, but must be then articulated according to the various idiosyncratic narrative and aesthetic strategies of the single works.

If we read the first novel of the Western tradition, Chariton's *Adventures of Chaireas and Callirhoe*, we can already find a quite developed use of generic narrative situations, especially regarding the relationship between lovers and rivals, and the unusually sympathetic representation of Dionysius, a character who destabilizes the system of identifications, as we will see below. The authorial voice – an external narrator, extradiegetic-heterodiegetic[5] – is quite an intrusive one, which sometimes makes explicit his direction of the events. In a significant moment of the so-called infra-textual closure, the beginning of the final book, we read the following interesting passage:

> And I think that this last chapter will prove very agreeable to its readers: it cleanses away the grim events of the earlier ones. There will be no more pirates or slavery or lawsuits or fighting or suicide or wars or conquests; now there will be lawful love and sanctioned marriage. So I shall tell you how the goddess brought the truth to light and revealed the unrecognized pair to each other.[6]

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4 See Fusillo, *Il romanzo*, pp. 12–14.

5 The extradiegetic narrator hovers over the story he tells, and he does not appear as a character within it; for the terminology see Genette, *Narrative Discourse*.

6 Chariton, *Chaireas and Callirhoe* VIII 1, trans. in Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, p. 110. On the passage see Whitmarsh, “Divide et Rule”, esp. pp. 47–48.

In this commentary about his own narration, the narrator focuses a basic dialectics of the Greek novel: on one hand a potentially unlimited series of adventures, organised in a sequence of fixed *topoi*, here expressed by an effective *polysyndeton* (pirates **or** slavery **or** lawsuits **or** fighting **or** suicide **or** wars **or** conquest); on the other hand the final triumph of eros, that overwhelms the fragmentation of space and time. The accumulation of adventures is presented as a negative element, aimed at the happy end; but at the same time it constitutes the main part of the narration, creating the polyphony of the genre. It is interesting to notice that Chariton uses – we do not know how intentionally – an Aristotelian term, «cleanses away» (*katharsion*),[7] in order to stress the aesthetic function of his final book. In fact, the theory of the novel implicit in this self-reflexive passage is quite Aristotelian, even though in an easier and consolatory way: passions and melodrama are the core of the narration, and must be experienced and then purified by the public. Also Aristotelian is the relevance of recognition (*anagnorisis*), which is mentioned as the main means to produce the cathartic closure.[8] Recognition is, notably, at the same time a *topos* and a narrative technique that goes back to the second Homeric poem, the most canonical archetype of every novelistic form (and of every intertextual technique[9]), the *Odyssey*; and it is also a dramatic device, typical of ancient tragedy and comedy, which condenses the Aristotelian, cognitive vision of narration as a passage from ignorance to knowledge. In the *Poetics*, indeed, you can also find a latent, metaphorical sense of the concept of recognition, as a quintessential source of aesthetic pleasure; for any audience, to enjoy a work of fiction always means to recognize parts of its own identity, experience, culture. This metaphorical meaning of recognition, which makes it very close to the crucial concept of identification, comes back in many modern aesthetic reflexions, from Marcel Proust to Sigmund Freud: recognition implies, in this case, to recover lost or repressed elements from the unconscious life.

Chariton's significant metaliterary passage highlights the two axes upon which is based the entire structure of the Greek novel: love and adventure. They can be considered two opposite narrative forces: the first one is clearly centripetal, because it creates unity and closure, while the second is clearly centrifugal, because it produces new narrative episodes and settings. The basic plot of this genre involves a couple of noble, young and extraordinarily beautiful adolescents, who fall in love at first sight, are separated by the Chance (the

7 Aristotle, *Poetics* 6, 1449b26.

8 Aristotle, *Poetics* 11, 1452a30–32.

9 On intertextuality as a literary devise basing on the borrowing of phrases and concepts from other texts see Genette, *Palympsests*.

most powerful divine force of this quite secular universe), live innumerable parallel adventures, and are re-united at the end in the compulsory happy ending. It is a common scheme, richly varied by the single novelists, and will have an intense reception till the baroque age and beyond.

The separation of the couple covers thus the largest part of the narration, especially in the first, para-literary phase. As a matter of fact, requited love and happiness are extremely difficult to describe: they do not arouse action and tension (a universal law, valid in almost every age and culture). In this central section dominated by adventure, the Greek novel adapts a large amount of classical literary genres, major and minor: epic, tragedy, comedy, lyric poetry, historiography, philosophy, rhetoric, paradoxography (literature dealing with abnormal or inexplicable phenomena), fable, novella, *ekphrasis* (description).[10] In the age of positivist philology almost each of those genres was considered the archetype of the novel, since the main focus of the scientific interest in the ancient novel was to discover which was its actual ancestor, as if literary genres could be treated like biological species. Even a philological masterpiece such as Erwin Rohde's massive book,[11] impressive because of its literary analysis of *topoi*, their genealogy and metamorphosis, shows no interest in the literary strategies of the works he analyses. Today the perspective is totally different: the encyclopaedia of literary genres we find in ancient novels is seen as a proof of its intertextual polyphony, and can give some insight into its cultural function in the Hellenistic age and late antiquity. It is a feature which will play an important role in modern times as well, if we think of Virginia Woolf's[12] effective definition of the novel as "cannibal" form, which arrived late, and immediately tended to absorb all the other literary genres. It is a definition which in a way anticipates Bakhtin's now canonical theory of the novel as polyphonic and dialogic genre.[13]

The function played by those multifarious rewritings of literary genres is twofold and quite ambivalent: on one hand ancient novels transcribe them in a lower, bourgeois and everyday dimension, almost trivializing them and putting them closer to a supposedly quite large public; on the other hand this rich intertextual material aims at ennobling a newly born genre, a literary bastard, and at heroicizing the love of the main couple.

If adventure covers the biggest part of narration, giving to it a rich polyphony of genres, stories, and rewritings, love is still the main, unifying theme.

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10 Fusillo, *Il romanzo*, pp. 17–109.

11 Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*.

12 Virginia Woolf, "Poetry, Fiction, and the Future, ed. McNeillie, p. 434.

13 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*.

Even if it recovers the classical representation of eros as uncanny experience (especially Sappho's symptomatology), the Greek novel presents a totally new vision of love: it is not by chance that the late Michel Foucault gave it significant space in his *History of Sexuality,* defining it as a new erotic.[14] The canonical erotic relationships of the classical age were always characterized by a strong dissymmetry of age and power: pederasty, marriage, heterai. On the contrary, in the Greek novel symmetry plays a central role: the two components of the main couple have the same age, the same extraordinary, magnetic, divine beauty, the same high social niveau, and live the same parallel adventures.[15] This extreme parallelism seems almost to concretize in the narration Plato's powerful myth about eros and sexual desire, Aristophanes' speech on the androgynous in the *Symposium,* which describes every kind of sexuality as nostalgia of a lost unity.[16] Moreover, this parallelism can be also explained in psychoanalytic terms, since symmetry is an essential feature of the unconscious logic, which does not know the principles of identity and non-contradiction, and the fragmentation of space and time, since it aims at gaining a totalizing fusion. The basic narrative of the Greek novel celebrates the triumph of eros on space and time, eternizing the mutual fulguration of love at first sight. At the end of the complicated plot and of the innumerable adventures, the main couple is still young, beautiful and in love, as if nothing had happened. Voltaire made an effective parodic distortion of this scheme in his *Candide,* depicting at the end the female main character as extremely old and ugly, totally unable to enjoy the happy ending.

From a thematic point of view the Greek novel seems to realize in its topics and in its basic plot the dreams and desires of a new audience (probably a mixed masculine and feminine one, which took part to public readings).[17] But this does not imply that the genre is totally consolatory and entertaining: there are several ambiguities in the single realizations of this narrative scheme, especially regarding a constant element: the representation of the rivals, who try to seduce the main couple and threaten their heroic chastity and fidelity. Their characterization is usually negative, according to the idealization of the heterosexual couple, which is the main ideological program of this new erotic. But in many cases this black and white vision becomes more flexible, and one can trace some more or less latent empathy towards the rivals. From this point

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14 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, pp. 228–33.

15 Konstan, *Sexual Simmetry*; Fusillo, *Il Romanzo*, pp. 186–96.

16 Plato, *Symposion* 189d-193a.

17 On different aspects of this topic, see Paschalis/Panayotakis/Schmeling (eds.), *Readers and Writers*.

of view the Greek novel can be read as an embryo of that complex dynamic of modern novel described by René Girard as triangular desire.[18]

2 The Two Phases of the Greek Novel

The most ancient novels give the impression of a newly born genre which aims at gaining literary prestige through ennobling strategies, such as epic and historiographical elements. In the first complete novel in Western literature, Chariton's *The Adventures of Chaireas and Callirohe*, as well as in the fragments of Ninos' novel, we find a historical setting, which gives a sense of authenticity to a purely fictional work: a public dimension to a totally private and intimate story. As happens in the modern historical novel, from Walter Scott onwards, this setting is not very accurate or precise: it does not come from a true contamination with the literary genre of historiography, because its function is almost exclusively that of an exquisite background. A similar function can be detected also in the very frequent Homeric quotations in Chariton's novel, which punctuate and underline crucial moments of the action (of course especially the *topos* of the war). Moreover, they sometimes activate an interesting dialectic between the quoting and the quoted text, and their narrative contexts, trusting the literary competence of the public.

On one hand Chariton shows the above-mentioned features of the founder of a new genre,[19] confirmed also by his quite linear and simple style. On the other hand he introduces interesting variations and nuances in the topic scheme, especially regarding the representation of emotional conflicts through interior monologues, and the triangle between lovers and rivals, as we have already hinted at. His most interesting figure, Dionysius, is a cultivated and noble rival, extremely far from the purely negative characterization of pirates and other narrative obstacles; he arouses quite an intense empathy, especially because of his self-control and education, although he is obviously excluded from the happy ending and the main narrative logic. From this point of view Chariton's novel sounds more refined and complex than the second one of our corpus, Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesiacs,* which presents to us the basic plot in its most elementary form, narrated with a frantic rhythm, totally focused on action and devoid of significant psychological development. Those features could be a result of the novel's status as epitome of a larger work, but the question is controversial. Nevertheless, even in this case the negative representation

18 Girard, *Deceit, Desire and Novel*.

19 See Tilg, *Chariton of Aphrodisias*.

of rivals shows one significant exception: the pirate Hippothous, who oscillates between the roles of opponent and friend, and takes part in the happy ending together with his boyfriend, an usual, non-tragic vision of homosexual love.

If we read just the beginning of Achilles Tatius' novel *The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon,* we immediately perceive the difference with the previous phase, and the complex maturity of the second rhetorical and Sophistic one. It is a long and detailed description of a painting, totally focused on the visual element, and without the narrative expansion typical of Homeric *ekphrasis.* It is one of many insertions of this extremely polyphonic novel: the description of works of art was another newly born literary genre, a kind of art criticism. But the insertion is not purely digressive: the content of the painting alludes to and anticipates the main narration, and the same function will be exploited by the other two long descriptions which will open book 3 and 5, creating a well-balanced structure and an articulated infra-textual closure. This hermeneutic game with the reader,[20] who must catch symbolic connections and play with the expectations, is typical of this more sophisticated phase. In fact it is an ironical *pastiche* of the Greek novel: Achilles Tatius adopts the conventions of the genre, but at the same time ironically subverts them, with a very ambivalent attitude, not a simply parodic one.[21] It suffices to mention some significant features: chastity, which characterizes every couple of the Greek novel, is here obtained by chance, and not by personal choice. In the beginning, which clearly recalls a comedy, the main couple is going to have a secret sexual intercourse, but their desires are thwarted by the intervention of Leucippe's mother. The other interrelated feature, fidelity, is broken once by the male main character who has intercourse with a distinctly positive rival figure, Melite, who at the end will pass the sacred test of adultery thanks to an ingenious lye. Moreover, many *topoi* of the genre, such as apparent death, are multiplied beyond verisimilitude (Leucippe dies three times, every time in a very spectacular and mysterious way). Generally speaking, Achilles Tatius' dimension is closer to everyday life and to comedy: it is not by chance that he adopts a first-person narration, which is linked in ancient narrative to the so-called comic-realistic novel we will deal with later. The entire novel is told by Clitophon, after an introduction which describes the epic situation of the narrative act (the contemplation of the painting): this choice certainly softens the parallelism of the main couple, which is far less idealized than in other ancient novels (separation and adventures are quite a bit shorter). Nevertheless, Achilles Tatius' novel remains a Greek erotic novel, and cannot be considered

20 See Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel.*

21 On this issue, see Fusillo, *Il romanzo*, pp. 98–109.

a parody, especially because at the end its main characters are "converted" to the ideal of chastity and fidelity, in a kind of *Bildungsroman* which goes back to the fundamentals of the genre. Like every novel in this phase, it is a refined and complex rewriting of a popular genre that exploits innovative narrative techniques, such as a restricted point of view and subjective narration.

Thanks to Goethe's enthusiastic appraisal and to Ravel's and Diaghilev's famous ballet, Longus Sophistes' *Daphnis and Chloe* is certainly the most famous Greek novel, the only one to have escaped in modern times a current aesthetic devaluation of this genre, until its recent revival. Its contamination with bucolic poetry gave birth to a hybrid form, the pastoral novel, which will have a long lasting success in modern literatures. This expressive choice implies, first the natural landscape as a predominant presence, and a complex dialectic between this bucolic dimension and a latent urban perspective. As a matter of fact, the idealization of nature is only the simplest and most immediate level of this dense text, the one which can explain its success, but also its somehow sickly effect. If we try to read at a more profound level, *Daphnis and Chloe* tells the story of the failure of a purely natural sexuality, devoid of cultural mediation. With an almost unveiled voyeurism Longus tells in fact the story of two adolescent shepherds, totally naive, who fall in love and progressively discover their mutual sexual desire, which they can finally realize only thanks to an external intervention that arrives, not by chance, from the city, in the form of a mature woman named Lykenion. The second consequence of Longus' contamination between erotic novel and bucolic poetry is thus a radical change in the central section of the basic scheme, devoted to adventures: in this case the usual *topoi* of this part, such as abduction by pirates, war, travel by sea, are reduced to short allusions, almost ironical quotations from tradition, and substituted by a purely psychological journey in a static setting. The happy ending exploits the classical technique of recognition, clearly inspired by Menander's comedies: the two main characters belong, in fact, to wealthy and noble urban families. The prolepsis about the charming future together, including a performative repetition of their experience with their sons, is strongly consolatory, but the final pun which alludes to the violence of the first night after the wedding, recalling some mythical embedded stories, confirms the complex nature of this novel, especially regarding gender and sexuality.

Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* is certainly the most significant work of the Greek novel. This epic and philosophical ennoblement of a low genre, which will play a central role in the history of the modern novel, conveys, in fact, a profound reflection on narration, aesthetic reception and (cultural) identity. It is a work that still has much to say to contemporary culture, in particular about the

interrelationship between narrative and philosophical discourse and the epistemological value of temporal configuration.

Heliodorus' most effective innovation on the scheme of Greek novel involves temporal macro-structure, focalization and narrative voice. As we have already hinted at, the topic love story begins with the couple falling in love in their common birthplace, then a separation followed by a long series of parallel adventures in time and space, and a conclusion which sees their re-unification and their return to the starting point, with no significant change or development in the characters. As Bakhtin points out, it is an "extratemporal hiatus between two moments of biographical time".[22] It is actually a circular story, a long journey that returns finally to its starting point, narrated in a very linear way. Heliodorus, on the contrary, chooses to tell a linear story – the heroine, Charikleia, discovers and regains her birthplace, Aethiopia, and travels therefore from Delphi to Meroe – in a complex and circular way, beginning *in medias res* from a typical kidnapping of the couple. These features could be interpreted just as intertextual devices directly taken from the archetype of every novelistic form, the *Odyssey*, that is to say a cluster of narrative techniques that tend to give an epic architecture to a recently born, still marginal genre. But there is something more here that concerns an implicit philosophy of the novel. The main difference with the second Homeric poem lies in the massive use of restricted focalization:[23] the almost cinematographic beginning *in medias res* is a mysterious scene, strictly narrated from the perspective of a group of characters totally unaware of the event. The reader is not previously informed about names, geography, setting, context, characters, and has to infer every single element. This gradual deciphering is not limited to the *incipit*, but involves the overall structure of the work. Only halfway through the novel (at the end of the fifth book) does the reader learn the background of the dramatic situation, when it is told once again, this time from a different, emotionally involved perspective. This narrative strategy is aimed at producing suspense, but also has semantic and thematic values. It expresses the neo-platonic vision which inspires the entire novel, becoming sometimes explicit, for example in the mystic rewriting of the *topos* of love at first sight, directly taken from the *Phaedrus*.[24] The divine leaves traces, signs, clues, that must be deciphered and reconstructed in a signifying context. Hermeneutic problems are constantly evoked: the characters, as well as the readers, often have to face mysterious

22 *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 90.

23 The term was coined by Genette as a substitute for point of view, thus meaning the perspective from which a story is told: Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, pp. 189–92.

24 Plato, *Phaedrus* 250d-253c, in *Aethtiopica* 3.5,4–6.

events that are treated as complex texts to decipher. Even the external narrator shows a limited knowledge of the events, a condition that would have been unconceivable both in ancient epic and in the first phase of the Greek novel, and which will be typical of the modernist novel. The narrator frequently lists different interpretations of an event without expressing a preference, or stresses his limited vision with expressions such as «I think», «I guess». As a result, we have an impressive interweaving between narrative techniques and ideology, between a self-conscious use of focalization and a Neo-platonic vision. According to Heliodorus, reality always needs interpretation; and to tell a complicated story withholding narrative information, introducing ambiguities, enhancing voices and visions, manipulating narrative time, is a way to express the philosophical potentiality of the novel.

Together with the beginning *in medias res*, Heliodorus uses another structural narrative device taken from the *Odyssey*, metadiegesis, transforming it into a self-reflexive strategy. Odysseus' long analeptic narration has a clear metaliterary value: the emotive reaction that the poet depicts in his audience, the Pheacians, is the same he wants to arouse in his audience. Heliodorus amplifies this element, representing a complex relationship between narrator and narratee. Though not the protagonist, as in the Homeric poem, the first is a very important character: an Egyptian priest, Kalasiris, imbued with an encyclopedic, syncretistic culture, who disserts upon Homer's life, religious mysteries, magic, and astrology, and several other phenomena. It is easy to recognize here an effect of *mise en abyme*[25]: his figure recalls that of the author. Besides, apart from his long narration, he also seems to rule the action: he protects the main couple, deciphers and contributes to achieving the divine plan of bringing Charikleia back to her native land. The addressee of his narration is an Athenian, (an important feature, adding to the polyphony of cultures present in this novel), Cnemon, and one could say that he embodies a pattern of reception implied in the first, more popular phase of the genre Heliodorus is rewriting. To put it briefly, he is a typical sentimental reader. He does not distinguish reality from representation, loves digressions and spectacular elements, and is extremely impatient, passionate and melodramatic. His reception is definitively not false: when he stresses his emotional involvement: "And if the story being told is the love of Theagenes and Charikleia, who could be so insensitive, so steely-hearted, that he would not be spellbound by the tale,

25 On this narrative device (the novel is made to mirror a reality extern to the narrated story), see Dällenbach, *Le récit spéculaire*.

even if it lasted a whole year?",[26] he tells. Heliodorus, like Homer, is certainly depicting the aesthetic reaction he is aiming at producing in his public. The *Aethiopica*, however, is something more than a sentimental novel; the love story acquires symbolic value, and is part of a broader divine design. In his narration Kalasiris tries to initiate his narratee into hermeneutic activity: the initiate must learn to recognize a profound meaning under the surface of events. An initiation that is partially doomed to failure: Cnemon will not join the main couple in their voyage towards Aethiopia, although he is fascinated by the mysteric wisdom of the Egyptian priest. The relationship between narrator and narratee is thus conceived as a hermeneutic game, in which the latter embodies the popular phase of the genre Heliodorus is rewriting, and the first the authorial strategy of a philosophical reinterpretation. Like the external narrator, Kalasiris adopts a narrative technique based on the concealment of information and on the gradual deciphering of the concealed meaning: the same pattern of reading the events which is reserved to the external public of the novel.[27]

This complex, polyphonic system of narrative voices and cultures culminates in a triumphal, baroque ending, which also has a strong meta-literary nature. The solution of the plot, Charikleia's recognition as an Aethiopian princess, occurs in front of a mixed audience that takes part in the events. It is not a summary retelling of the story, as we have in Chariton and Achilles Tatius; it is a dramatization of the closure, which can re-echo the aural receptive mechanism of ancient novels (probably public lectures in theatres), and openly hints at different levels of aesthetic reaction. Rejecting a widespread and implicit convention of ancient and modern narrative, Heliodorus usually shows an extreme attention to the problems of linguistic communication, reflecting the multicultural nature of the Roman Empire. He clearly states when his characters speak different languages, whether and how well they understand each other, if they use an interpreter, if they speak their native language or a foreign one, and how do they speak it. In this last scene the linguistic features mirror different ways of understanding the resolution of the plot.

> The populace cheered and danced for joy where they stood, and there was no discordant voice as young and old, rich and poor, united in jubilation, for though they had understood very little of what was said, they

26 Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 4.4,3, trans. J.R. Morgan in Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, p. 426.

27 On Heliodorus' narrative strategies, see among many Winkler, "The Mendacity of Kalasiris"; Morgan, "Reader and Audiences"; Hunter, "The *Aithiopika* of Heliodorus".

> were able to surmise the facts of the matter from what had already transpired concerning Charikleia; or else perhaps they had been brought to a realization of the truth by the same divine force that had staged the entire drama and that now produced a perfect harmony of diametric opposites: joy and sorrow combined; tears mingled with laughter; the most hideous horror transformed to celebrations; those who wept also laughed: those who grieved also rejoiced; they found those whom they had not sought and lost those whom they thought to have found; and finally the offering of human blood, which all had expected to see, was transformed into a sacrifice free of all stain.[28]

This important passage expresses a poetics of the novel which sounds like a renewed and spectacular version of Aristotelian *katharsis*: a harmonious composition of long, dramatic conflicts described in terms of paradoxical oppositions and mixed emotions. The popular participation of the audience, which is, of course, also a wish for the success of the work, defines a new kind of aesthetic reception. Intuitive and emotional, this reception is not dependent on a detailed comprehension of the highly-wrought plot, explained, with a typical Heliodorean double motivation, as the product of a supernatural force in the form of a stage direction containing another meta-literary element. This theatrical recognition scene, viewed by an Aethiopian audience that does not understand Greek, and the subsequent initiation of the main couple to Helios and Selene (Aethiopian equivalents of Apollo and Artemis) embodies a syncretistic and hybrid vision of the novel, in which Neo-platonic eros is the unifying and centripetal force, opposed to the centrifugal fragmentation of adventures, travels, seductions.

This second phase consists of three complex works, which rewrite in very different ways (ironical pastiche, bucolic contamination, philosophical reinterpretation) a popular and sentimental genre. It is not by chance that they will play an important role in byzantine and modern times, especially in the baroque age, when they will be considered great epic poems, chosen as models for the new narrative, adapted into tragedies, operas, paintings, poems, celebrated and imitated by Cervantes, Racine, Shakespeare, Basile, Tasso and many other now canonical classics.

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28 Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 10.38, trans. J.R. Morgan in Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, pp. 586–87.

3 The Comic-Realistic Trend

The Byzantine selection of ancient novels has clearly privileged a homogenous corpus, which gave an idealized vision of love experience, particularly apt to allegorical and moral reinterpretations. Papyri and other evidence testify to a wider and more various situation of ancient narrative, confirmed by the Latin novel. First and foremost from a stylistic point of view, we have already seen that the Greek novel demonstrates considerable nuances and variations, from Achilles Tatius' ironical rewriting, which owes much to the comic tradition, to Chariton's Menandrean and bourgeois style, to Heliodorus' sublime, epic and philosophical architecture. But fragments such as Iolaus' novel, the so-called Greek *Satyricon,* or Lollianus' *Phoenikika*,[29] present quite different material: explicit sexual scenes (including homosexual intercourses), obscene and grotesque novellas, ghosts and mysteries, orgies and false sacrifices, Grand Guignol effects, and contamination between poetry and prose. Classical philologists and theorists of the novel used to map ancient narrative through a sharp dichotomy between the Greek idealized novel and the Latin comic-realistic one. It is certainly not a false perspective, but it cannot describe the complex variety of ancient fiction. The papyrological evidence shows us that a significant trend of comic-realistic and grotesque narrative was very lively in Greek literature as well, while Apuleius' novel combines a picaresque, comic and realistic central narration (taken from its Greek model) with a final mystical dimension.[30]

To understand this important aspect of the ancient novel we must deal with perhaps the most fascinating, elusive, and experimental text of Latin literature, Petronius' *Satyricon.* Much of this elusive character comes notably from the text's fragmentary condition, but a careful literary analysis shows the deliberately episodic nature of this novel: it is a subversive text that plays with the reader's expectations, with genre categories, narrative roles, and linguistic registers.

Petronian innovations definitively look towards the modern novel and contemporary experimentations. First of all is his revolutionary transformation of a theme that is among the specific features of novelistic writing: travel. Compared to the ancient archetype of any fiction of adventure, the *Odyssey*, and to its re-use in the Greek novel, the *Satyricon* shows an impressive absence of teleology: travels are no more a negative experience, a test to be passed in order to reach the final goal of conjugal reunification. In Petronius' novel,

29 Both edited in Stephens/Winkler (eds.), *Ancient Greek Novels. The Fragments*, pp. 314–74.

30 Ed. Zimmermann, *Apulei Metamorphoseon*.

characters move from one place to another without following any organic design frequently just for pleasure's sake. The true propulsive force of narration is the encounter (a famous Bakhtinian chronotope),[31] which allows the confrontation with manifold social types and the insertion of a various encyclopedic material. In this way the novel turns out to be a voyage into the labyrinths of language, body and sexuality, in which adventures follow each other in a paratactic, irregular and centrifugal way.

As already hinted at, a second noteworthy Petronian innovation is its open form. The *Satyricon* frequently follows the course of a conversational novel, full of discussions on art and poetry, with quotations from or recitations of entire works of poetry, favoured by the encounters with characters such as the professor of rhetoric, Agamemnon, and especially the poetaster, Eumolpus. Finally, a last Petronian feature which looks towards modernity is certainly its theatricality. His characters (especially the protagonist and narrator, Encolpius) conceive their adventures in terms of sublime literary models, epic and tragic, and read their experience as a continuous performance.[32]

Petronius's novelty has often been explained and labelled with another elusive category, realism. As a matter of fact, numerous features Ian Watt (1957) considered typical of the English novel as a new, revolutionary genre can be found in the *Satyricon* (and generally in ancient fiction) as well: plots not taken from mythology, a stress on everyday life, the pattern of autobiographical memory, and so on. Walter Reed[33] acknowledged several significant novelistic elements in ancient prose fiction, such as the use of contemporary characters, psychological analyses, reflections on social conditions, and sophisticated awareness of the conventionality of literary tradition. Nevertheless, he denies the genre the definition of true novel because of its religious idealization and, in the specific case of Petronius (the only one devoid of any transcendence), because of the aristocratic bias of his parody. Margaret Doody,[34] on the contrary, has strongly defended the continuity between the ancient and modern novel, totally rejecting the novelty of British narrative of the 18th century.

Literary history, like the secular one, does not follow any teleological development, but is mostly ruled by chance and unpredictability. Petronius's idiosyncratic creation found its proper reception first in the 20th century, especially regarding categories such as new picaresque, nomadism, queer and camp sensibility. The first canonical picaresque novels of 16th and 17th

31 See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 111–29.

32 Panayotakis, *Theatrum Arbitri*.

33 Reed, *An Exemplary History of the Novel*.

34 See Doody, *The True History of the Novel*.

centuries seem to have been more influenced by the second Latin archetype, Apuleius' *Golden Ass,* which was translated into Spanish in the early 16th century.[35] If we look especially at the narrative organisation, both Apuleius and the Spanish picaresque follow quite a regular pattern: the potentially infinite series of encounters and adventures are always obstacles to surmount in order to survive and satisfy primary drives. Indeed, in Apuleius there is a teleological element, the orientation towards the final metamorphosis back to the human form, although it is basically obscured by a massive internal focalization on the "I" actor, which provides the single episodes with a great autonomy. From this point of view the Novel of the Ass is a parodic version of the idealized sentimental novel, just as the Spanish picaresque novel is a parody of pastoral romance. Petronius's adventures, on the other hand, are much more irregular, and frequently motivated only by curiosity and aimless pleasure. The *Satyricon* indeed sounds quite anarchic and nomadic; that is the reason why it can be compared, with the necessary caution, to the so-called new picaresque novel, typical of 20th-century literature (Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit,* Kafka's *Amerika,* Grass's *Blechtrommel* and so on).[36]

Moreover, Petronius's ambivalent re-use of consumer genres (mime, pantomime, sentimental novel), together with his promiscuous vision of homosexuality, and especially his melodramatic theatricality, has been read by Cecil Wooten as a first occurrence of a camp sensibility: an embryonic archetype.[37] First defined by Susan Sontag,[38] camp notably indicates a mixture of irony, theatricality, aestheticism, and juxtaposition of incongruous elements; a playful re-use of consumer culture; and a refined contamination of kitsch with cultivated, high-brow elements. It is a mode characteristic of postmodern culture, and in particular of gay communities, which often have strong relationships with manifold icons.[39] Since camp implies a shifting and performative idea of subjectivity, it often uses a picaresque narration: as in Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho*, a road movie often compared to the *Satyricon* (a comparison supported by the director, who acknowledges however that he read the novel after the movie was released), and characterized by a campy theatrical artificiality and a profound sense of nomadic dislocation.

35 See Garcia Gual, *The Ancient Novel*, esp. pp. 183–86.

36 On this issue see Fusillo,"From Petronius to *Petrolio*".

37 Wooten, "Petronius and camp".

38 Sontag, "*Notes on Camp*".

39 See Cleto, *Camp*.

4 Fantastic Novels

Lucian's *True Histories* is a strange case of a rationalist satire against incredible and unlikely narratives presented as real experiences, which has been read and appreciated precisely because of its fantastic contents. In a para-textual preface the author declares that every single word of his narration is a lie. After this subversive pact with his reader, (which radicalizes the famous paradox of Epimenides), the narrator tells a large number of incredible adventures, with a subjective technique and restricted point of view which give an effect of authenticity.[40] There is at base a profound tension (a Freudian *Kompromissvorstellung*) between the rationalist program and a latent pleasure in utopian imagery, evident in famous episodes, such as the ship inside a whale or, especially, the voyage to the moon; episodes that transformed it into an archetype of fantastic literature or even science fiction.[41] The *True Histories* testify thus to a large sector of ancient narrative, which is quite difficult to map, first because it is almost totally lost, and second because its borders with other genres, such as historiography, biography, ethnography, geography, are quite fluctuating. Nevertheless, we can argue that antiquity did have a fantastic novel, whose masterpiece might have been Antonius Diogenes' *The Incredible Adventures beyond Thule,* once considered the archetype of the Greek novel or the principal target of Lucian's satire, and finally studied in its autonomy.[42] From Photius' summary and the papyrological fragments,[43] we can deduce the complexity of a novel imbued with neo-Pythagorean visions that seek to challenge the limits of the real world from every point of view. Finally, the concept of transcending limits and borders immediately evokes a historic figure who exploited this challenge to the greatest possible degree, Alexander the Great. His legend, deeply inscribed in the cultural memory from West to East for many centuries, was created, not by chance, by an unofficial, marginal, nomadic form such as the (ancient) novel.[44]

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40 Lucian of Samosata, *True Histories* 1, 4, trans. Reardon, in id., *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, p. 622.

41 See e.g. Georgiadou/Larmour, *Lucian's Science Fiction Novel*.

42 Morgan, "Lucian's *True Histories*".

43 Both edited in Stephens/Winkler (eds.), *Ancient Greek Novels. The Fragments*, pp. 101–72.

44 On the *Alexander Romance* see the chapters by U. Moennig, F. Doufikar-Aerts, and J. Rubanovich in this volume.

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CHAPTER 2

Romantic Love in Rhetorical Guise: The Byzantine Revival of the Twelfth Century

Ingela Nilsson

In a pivotal scene of the 12th-century novelist Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles*, the female protagonist Drosilla is subject to unwelcome but rather pressing attentions from a certain Kallidemos, the brutish son of a local innkeeper. Drosilla's beloved Charikles is in fact sleeping inside the house, but Kallidemos has fallen in love with Drosilla at first sight and has his mind set on winning her heart. The strategy he chooses in order to achieve this is storytelling: "I beseech you to call to your mind", he says, "those who in the past were united by love into one soul".[1] Then follows a long list of literary lovers, presumably in order to inspire and convince the girl: we meet, among others, Theagenes and Charikleia (of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*), Daphnis and Chloe (of the novel by Longus), and Hero and Leander (of the hexameter poem by Musaeus).

This is not an exceptional passage per se – storytelling is a central part of courtship in many traditions, from antiquity onwards, – but the narrative context of the episode is one that deserves our attention. The event takes place in one of the so-called Komnenian novels, works that were modelled on and often alluded to the ancient Greek novel. While all four extent novels follow such a pattern, Eugenianos is unique in explicitly mentioning the literary models of late antiquity. We shall therefore take the passage cited above as our point of departure for a consideration of an interesting phase in the long history of Greek novelistic writing: the Byzantine revival of the 12th century.

We know of four novels written in the 12th century – the century of the Komnenian dynasty: *Hysmine and Hysminias* by Eumathios Makrembolites, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* by Theodore Prodromos, *Drosilla and Charikles* by Niketas Eugenianos, and *Aristandros and Kallithea* by Constantine Manasses (preserved only in fragments).[2] In spite of numerous similarities as to basic

1 Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 386–87, ed. Conca, p. 430: Λαβεῖν σε πρὸς νοῦν ἱκετεύω τοὺς πάλαι / ἔρωτι συγκραθέντας εἰς ψυχὴν μίαν (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 423).

2 For Greek text (with Italian trans.) of all four novels (including the fragments), see Conca, *Il romanzo bizantino del XII secolo*. English translation in Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, with

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plot and motifs, the four texts are different in form: Makrembolites wrote in prose while Prodromos and Eugenianos composed their novels in twelve-syllable verse and Manasses in the fifteen-syllable ('political') verse. Significant differences appear also in focus and overall theme: Makrembolites focuses on the power of erotic love by describing the sexual awakening of a young man, Prodromos seems to inscribe reflections of Byzantine diplomacy and court ceremonial, and Eugenianos lays a particular stress on marriage and marital ties. The fragmentary condition of Manasses' novel does not allow us to define any such focus, since the fragments probably reflect the excerptors' preferences rather than the structure and theme of the original text.[3] Questions of authorship and dating remain partly unresolved, but the novels may with reasonable certainty be placed in the period between *c.* 1135 and 1155. Their internal sequence is, however, still a matter of debate, especially as regards the relation between the novels by Makrembolites and Prodromos.[4] Since, in the following, I shall focus mainly on the relation of the Komnenian novels to the ancient novels and to their contemporary sociocultural and literary setting, the exact dating will not be discussed in any detail here.

1 The Composition of the Komnenian Novel: Themes and Motifs

As already mentioned, the Komnenian novels are modelled on the Greek novels of the Second Sophistic, especially *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius and the *Aethiopica* by Heliodorus, but also the pastoral *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus and the non-sophistic *Chaereas and Kallirhoe* by Chariton.[5]

references to translations into other languages. For an overall study of all Byzantine novels, including the late Byzantine romance, see Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*.

3 Cf. Mazal, *Der Roman des Konstantinos Manasses*, with its reconstruction of the plot, and Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 280–82; cf. Nilsson and Nyström, "To Compose, Read and Use". Due to its fragmentary condition, the novel by Manasses will be partly excluded from the present discussion on themes and motifs; on its transmission, see further below, pp. 58–59.

4 For a recent discussion of the dating, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 7–10, 161–65, 275–76, 342–43; for the internal sequence, cf. McAlister, "Aristotle on the Dream " and "A Relative Chronology"; Agapitos, "Narrative, Rhetoric and 'Drama'" and "Poets and Painters". On the respective authors and their milieu, see further below, pp. 47–48.

5 For the two phases of the ancient Greek novel, see the contribution by M. Fusillo in this volume pp. 21–38.

The degree to which these hypotexts[6] are visible varies from text to text and from episode to episode, from the extensive and consistent use of *Leucippe and Clitophon* in the novel by Makrembolites to the partial and more selective use of the *Aethiopica* in the novels by Prodromos and Eugenianos.[7] The novelistic hypotexts are combined in various manners and interwoven with citations from and allusions to other ancient texts, ranging from Homer and tragedy to Plato and Aristotle. The Komnenian novels are accordingly learned and polyphonic texts, filled with transtextual links and literary allusions which connect them with ancient, late-antique, and Byzantine literature.

With allusion as the most common means of referring to the ancient models, the narrative device employed by Eugenianos – to have one of his own characters enumerate novelistic characters known from the ancient novels – becomes an interesting contrast to the practice of his fellow novelists. After the passage cited at the beginning of this article, urging Drosilla to remember lovers of the past, Kallidemos draws the heroine's and the reader's attention to the *Aethiopica*: "Arsake's love for Theagenes, / Achaimenes' passion for Charikleia".[8] We might have expected rather the love between hero and heroine, that is Theagenes and Charikleia, but Kallidemos is referring to the spurned lovers of Heliodorus, a position in which he is now about to find himself.[9] After an exposition on desire, brimming with allusions to Heliodorus, Kallidemos turns to a more chaste example, likewise drawn from the novels: the love of Daphnis and Chloe. Kallidemos seems to identify with "that sweet Daphnis, only a shepherd", "still ignorant of anything other than love".[10]

> For long he loved the fair Chloe,
> Chloe, that unaffected maiden,
> whose glance was fire for the youth,

6 In the terminology of Gerard Genette I'm here using, a hypotext is to be understood as an earlier text which serves as a source for a subsequent piece of literature: Genette, *Palimpsestes*.

7 On Makrembolites and Achilles Tatius, see Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*; on the use of Heliodorus in Prodromos and Eugenianos, see Agapitos, "Narrative, Rhetoric and 'Drama'", esp. pp. 148–56.

8 Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 389–90, ed. Conca, p. 432: τὸν Ἀρσάκης ἔρωτα πρὸς Θεαγένην, / τὸν Ἀχαιμένους πρὸς Χαρίκλειαν πόθον (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 423). The whole episode is analysed in detail by Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia,* pp. 68–79.

9 On this episode, see Burton, "A Reemergence", and Jouanno, "Un héritier".

10 Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 442 and 445, ed. Conca, p. 434 (Δάφνις ἐκεῖνος ὁ γλυκύς, ποιμὴν μόνον … καὶ μηδὲν εἰδὼς τῶν ἐρώτων τι πλέον) (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 424–25).

> whose words were bows and her embraces darts.
> In matters of love the generation that is past was a golden one,
> for he who was loved responded greatly;
> this present generation of bronze is incapable of that
> for, when beloved, it does not wish to respond.[11]

Here appears a juxtaposition of past love and present, opening for a complaint on the behaviour of young women who are not convinced by their suitors (6, 456–72). Kallidemos is perishing, which brings to his mind the destiny of Leander, who at least could share death with his beloved Hero; he himself is just drowning from a tempest of desire (6, 494). Moving on to one further example drawn from the past, Kallidemos then reminds Drosilla of Polyphemos and his desire for Galateia:

> You are not unaware that of old
> the famed Kyklops, in love with Galateia,
> attempted to entice the unwilling girl,
> for she greatly loathed the shaggy monster
> and fled from her lover; yet she loved him,
> for she aimed only little apples at the great creature.[12]

Again, Kallidemos is referring to a girl trying to escape her suitor's embrace, but his interpretation of this story is apparently that Galateia was not really trying to get away. Likewise, he continues, Drosilla might not have any apples to throw, but he is grateful for her "huge smile" (6, 538: μειδίαμα μέγα) which he sees as a recompense for his "many stories" (6, 539: πολλῶν λόγων).[13] Just as the passage on Heliodorian characters was filled with allusions to the *Aethiopica*, this episode is filled with allusions to the *Idylls* of Theocritus, sustaining the

11 Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 448–55, ed. Conca, p. 434: Ταύτης ἐρῶν ἦν τῆς καλῆς Χλόης πάλαι, / Χλόης ἐκείνης τῆς ἀπλάστου παρθένου, / ἧς πῦρ μὲν ἦν τὸ βλέμμα τῷ νεανίᾳ, / λόγοι δὲ τόξα, καὶ περιπλοκαὶ βέλη. / Χρυσοῦν γένος πρὸς φίλτρον ἦν τὸ προφθάσαν· / ὁ γὰρ φιληθεὶς ἀντεφίλει μειζόνως· / οὐχ οἷόν ἐστι τοῦτο χάλκεον γένος· / φιλούμενον γὰρ ἀντιφιλεῖν οὐ θέλει. (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 425, slightly revised).

12 Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 503–08, ed. Conca, p. 438: Οὐκ ἀγνοεῖς γὰρ ὡς περίφημος πάλαι / ἐρῶν ἐκείνης τῆς Γαλατείας Κύκλωψ / προεῖλκεν ἀπειθοῦσαν αὐτὴν τὴν κόρην· / τὸ λάσιον γὰρ ἐβδελύττετο πλέον, / φυγοῦσα τὸν φιλοῦντα· πλὴν ἔστεργέ μοι, / μήλοις μόνοις βάλλουσα μικροῖς τὸν μέγαν (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 426).

13 Cf. the translations by Jeffreys in *Four Byzantine Novels,* p. 427, and Burton, *A Byzantine Novel,* p. 137, who both translate λόγων with 'words'. To me it seems rather clear that Kallidemos is referring to the effect of the love stories he has just narrated.

narrative with intertextual links.[14] This is a rather common device in the Komnenian novels: clusters of allusions and quotations to the same work or author, creating a certain narrative effect. A nightmare scene in the novel by Makrembolites, for instance, is filled with allusions to ancient tragedy in order to depict the frightful experience of the protagonist.[15] The effect here in the novel by Eugenianos is rather comical, recalling the humorous mode of the Hellenistic Theocritus, since the stories of Kallidemos seem badly chosen and are used in an unskilful manner.

Let us consider the narrative scheme of Kallidemos. Starting with the characters from the *Aethiopica*, he chose to bring up the unsuccessful suitors Arsake and Achaimenes. It may seem reasonable that Kallidemos – rival of the novel's hero Charikles – remembers the characters that found themselves in a situation similar to his own, but they are examples of unrequited love and thus highly unsuitable for someone trying to seduce a girl.[16] The next story seemed more suitable: Daphnis and Chloe, chaste and innocent lovers who were united in marriage. But Kallidemos presents it as an example of the golden age of lovers – nothing like it is now, with contemporary girls; the potential effect of the story is thus thwarted as it is turned into a criticism of Drosilla's resistance, hardly convincing her to give in. Leaving the ancient novels behind, Kallidemos moved on to Hero and Leander – who died, and not even together – and then to Galateia and the Kyklops. The latter is a shaggy unsophisticated monster who scares his beloved as he chases her, vaguely reminiscent of our own Kallidemos. This similarity becomes apparent at the end of the long discourse, as he still gets no other reaction from Drosilla than a smile and loses his patience:

> But strip off to your very skin
> and let naked limbs lie against each other;
> for your light garment seems to me like
> Semiramis' wall. May this happen to me![17]

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14 Theocritus, esp. *Idylls* 1 and 11; see Burton, "A Reemergence".

15 See Nilsson, "Static Imitation?".

16 See Jouanno, "Nicétas Eugénianos: un héritier", pp. 350–51, along with Burton, "A Reemergence", and *A Byzantine Novel*, p. 200.

17 Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 640–43, ed. Conca, p. 444: Ἀλλ᾽ ἐκδυθείης μέχρις αὐτοῦ σαρκίου / καὶ γυμνὰ γυμνοῖς ἐμπελάσειας μέλη· / ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ γὰρ καὶ τὸ λεπτόν σου φάρος / τεῖχος Σεμιράμιδος. Ὣς γένοιτό μοι (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 430).

The attentive reader, familiar with the workings of lovers' discourse, has known from the very start that Kallidemos will not succeed, and at this point it is confirmed: the brute has been disclosed as an unskilful narrator and potential rapist, with no sense of rhetorical or erotic sophistication. The smiles of Drosilla are significant (6, 538 and 6, 555[18]), because they are smiles shared by the novelistic character and the audience: we smile together at poor Kallidemos, a bad narrator who failed to impress the girl.[19]

For the Byzantine audience, the rhetorical aspects of the passage must have been crucial for the comical effect: Kallidemos cannot convince the girl because he fails in rhetorical method (*inventio*) and in his choice of convincing *exempla*. To a learned audience, trained in rhetoric from early years, the examples were clearly badly chosen and presented in a sloppy manner.[20] Equally important was the Byzantine familiarity with previous uses of the motif in the novelistic hypotexts. Take, for instance, the novel by Achilles Tatius, where a similar strategy is used by the protagonist with great success: Clitophon is advised to tell erotic stories to Leucippe in order to excite her, which indeed ends in the desired result.[21] The audience's knowledge of the rhetorical construction of successful narratives along with late antique motifs is what makes Kallidemos' subversive behaviour comical and, from a literary point of view, parodical.[22]

The discourse performed by Kallidemos thus provides us with a unique commentary on novelistic narration in the 12th century. First, within the fictional frame of his own narrative, Eugenianos comments upon the genre in which he works – a sophisticated, metaliterary and metatextual device. Second, the mixture of 'novels proper' (*Aethiopica*, *Daphnis and Chloe*) with other love stories (Hero and Leander, Galateia and Polyphemos) indicates a perception of narration as an overall category of the narrative mode: these stories are love

18 The latter (Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 555) in accordance with repunctuation suggested by Ruth Harder, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 428, n. 229; cf. translation by Burton, *A Byzantine Novel*, p. 136.

19 Cf. Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 225–301, on the "comic modulations" of the Komnenian novels and esp. pp. 288–300 on Eugenianos.

20 On the audience and the perception of the novels as rhetorical works, see Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, and Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, esp. pp. 25–112 (see also his chapter in this volume), but also (from different perspectives) Agapitos, "Narrative, Rhetoric and 'Drama'"; Odorico, "L'amour à Byzance", pp. 39–40; Meunier, "La rhétorique"; Burton, "Byzantine Readers".

21 Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 1, 16–19, and cf. 4, 3–5.

22 See Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 6: parody is "a form of imitation … not always at the expense of the parodied text".

stories, regardless of whether they may be seen as belonging to different genres. This perception is combined with the particular consciousness of the author about the nature and significance of earlier texts; thus, for instance, the clusters of allusions to suitable hypotexts combined with each individual love story. In order to grasp all the implications, the author expects his audience to have the same rhetorical and literary knowledge as himself and – presumably – his heroine Drosilla.

The central role that the heroine thus gains in the novel by Eugenianos is not unique; the Komnenian heroines may be chaste,[23] but they play a significant role on various levels of the narrative. Hysmine in particular, but also Drosilla and Rhodanthe, take an active part in the development of the events. All three girls flirt with the heroes, for instance, by exchanging 'kisses' by drinking from the same cup.[24] Hysmine and Drosilla both agree to elope, and we may note that Rhodanthe, even though she is abducted – "willingly or not" – by Dosikles and his friends, describes the event as her own wish.[25] These are indeed topoi that can be found also in the ancient novels, but they have been reworked and reinforced in the Byzantine versions.[26] In addition, the characterization of the heroine is often intertwined with the novels' overall rhetorical pattern and narrative structure. The girls are described in terms of dendromorphic and anthomorphic imagery (i.e. as trees and flowers) and in this manner tightly connected with the erotic space of the garden – a central location in the novelistic setting.[27] As Dosikles laments Rhodanthe, he describes her in flowery imagery:

> Alas, Rhodanthe, where is the springtime of your youth,
> the cypress of your fair figure,

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23 See Garland, "Be amorous but be chaste", arguing that the chastity motif of the ancient novels was taken to extremes by Komnenian novelists, mirroring the expectations of audience and society. On such expectations in a Christian society, see Burton, "Reviving the Pagan Greek Novel". See also Jouanno, "Discourse of the Body".

24 See *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* 2, 120–28; *Drosilla and Charikles* 9, 207–11; *Hysmine and Hysminias* 5, 10.3–5 and 5, 11–12. A similar scene appears in Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 2, 9. On flirting in *Hysmine and Hysminias*, see Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, pp. 227–31.

25 Cf. Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* 2, 440 and 2, 475–78.

26 See Jouanno, "Les jeunes filles", on the difference between ancient and Byzantine heroines.

27 See Littlewood, "Romantic Paradises", and Barber, "Reading the Garden". For a more recent (though brief) discussion, see Nilsson, "Nature Controlled by Artistry", pp. 24–26, and for a new ecocritical reading of such imagery, see Goldwyn, "Towards an Ecocriticism".

the roses of your cheeks and your lips,
the ivy of your locks (that strange adornment)
which weaves around your head as if round a plane tree?
Where are the lilies of you fair kisses,
The myrtle of your body, the verdure of your flesh,
The flowers of your eyelids? …[28]

We may note that the novel by Prodromos has no set piece garden description of the kind that we find in both *Hysmine and Hysminias* and *Drosilla and Charikles*, but the heroine Rhodanthe still represents the erotically charged plants of ekphrastic gardens. She thus embodies a central topos, implicitly bringing in a narrative element that alludes at both previous and contemporary novels. Variations of the same device are used by Makrembolites and Eugenianos: in *Hysmine and Hysminias*, all important erotic action takes place in the garden while, at the same time, Hysmine *is* a garden[29]; in *Drosilla and Charikles*, the depiction of the heroine is placed within the depiction of the garden, hinting at their close relationship.[30]

Even this brief look at the Komnenian novels shows that they offer constant variations of motifs and themes known from the ancient novel. They are clearly adaptations rather than imitations, reworked on many levels and by means of various transtextual devices, and allusions to their models (and to other texts, and well as to each other) is a means of creating both tension and meaning. In order to better understand that strategy we shall now move on to considering the novels as part of the wider cultural and literary context of the 12th century.

2 The Context of the Revival: Society and Culture

In the late 11th century, the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) introduced some changes that came to have an important impact on the sociocultural situation in 12th-century Constantinople. Alexios' military and

28 Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* 6, 291–98: Ὦμοι Ῥοδάνθη, ποῦ τὸ τῆς ἥβης ἔαρ, / ἡ κυπάριττος τῆς καλῆς ἡλικίας, / τὸ τῆς παρειᾶς καὶ τὸ τοῦ χείλους ῥόδον, / ὁ τῶν πλοκάμων κιττός (ἡ ξένη χάρις), / ὁ τὴν κορυφὴν ὡς πλατάνιστον πλέκων; / ποῦ σοι τὰ κρίνα τῶν καλῶν φιλημάτων, / τοῦ σώματος τὰ μύρτα, σαρκὸς ἡ χλόη, / τὸ τῶν βλεφάρων ἄνθος; … (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 105).

29 Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, pp. 97–101.

30 Agapitos, "Narrative, Rhetoric and 'Drama'", pp. 151–52.

diplomatic success in the early years of his reign enabled him to establish an economic and political stability that lasted for almost a century, and with this stability came internal reforms: the introduction of a military aristocracy, based on family relations, brought about a new aristocratic ideal and with that an extended social mobility.[31] Men of modest origin could reach high positions in society and the aristocratic mentality opened up an expanded environment for writers at the court: the imperial family and its aristocratic entourage needed occasional texts of various kinds. This need created an elaborate system of patronage and writing on commission, involving members of the imperial family, aristocrats, and a large number of writers.[32] This is the kind of environment in which we find the Komnenian novelists working by the mid-12th century.

Theodore Prodromos was one of the most successful court poets, working for various members of the Komnenian family. He wrote in both prose and verse and in a number of genres, including encomia, satire, hagiography, religious poetry, letters, and commentaries.[33] Niketas Eugenianos seems to have been less prolific, to judge from the works that have come down to us. No less than three monodies on Prodromos indicate that Eugenianos was one of his former students and friends; other works attributed to Eugenianos include *epithalamia* (wedding poems), epigrams, a funeral oration, and a letter.[34] Constantine Manasses wrote numerous works for imperial and aristocratic circles, among which a verse chronicle, *ekphraseis* (descriptions), orations, letters, and narrative poems; as already mentioned, his novel has been only fragmentarily preserved.[35] Eumathios (or Eustathios) Makrembolites is the only novelist whose identity is obscure: he might be identified as the subject of a funerary epigram, the recipient of two letters, and the author of a few riddles, but this identification remains uncertain. The name Makrembolites still connects the author with elite circles of Constantinople and this, along with the rhetorical sophistication of his novel, places him in the same literary circles as the other novelists.[36]

The overall sociocultural situation in Constantinople along with the interactive setting in which patrons and writers met – so-called *theatra*, a sort of

31 See Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi", and Holmes, "Political-Historical Survey".

32 On the development of intellectual life under Manuel I Komnenos, see Magdalino, *The Empire*, esp. pp. 316–412. On the workings of patronage in this period, see Mullett, "Aristocracy and Patronage".

33 For a fuller presentation with references, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 3–6.

34 For a fuller presentation with references, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 341–42.

35 For a fuller presentation with references, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 273–74.

36 For a fuller presentation with references, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 159–60.

literary salon – seems to have stimulated literary experimentation and the adaptation of ancient literature.[37] Not only novels were rewritten and 'revived' in the Komnenian period, but numerous ancient texts and genres were rediscovered and adapted to contemporary rhetorical taste. A common feature of many writers is their narrative confidence and their flagrant awareness of their own situation as writers, a characteristic which should be considered in light of the competitiveness of patronage and the necessity of self-praise and self-promotion. The novelists are indeed no exception. Manasses, for instance, in his verse chronicle constantly focuses on his own role as narrator in charge of the plot, guiding his audience through the events – whether historical, fictional, or ekphrastic – while at the same time drawing attention to the circumstances under which he composes the text.[38] We can note a similar strategy in the passage by Eugenianos discussed above, depicting and ridiculing the narrative strategies of the character Kallidemos (6, 382–551). As already noted, the episode may be read as a metaliterary comment on the literary pedigree of the 12th-century revival; at the same time, it functions as a (self-) reflecting remark on the narrative attitudes of the Komnenian novelists. Consider, for instance, the desperate plea of Kallidemos as a simultaneous plea of the novelist himself: "Wretch that I am, I perish, in my misery I am lost / unless these [stories] soften you heart".[39] Moreover, the perspective of patronage and self-promotion is relevant for our understanding of Kallidemos in relation to writer and reader: a figure of mockery for elite audiences who knew both traditions.

The focus on rhetorical self-expression is clear in all Komnenian novels, sometimes to the extent that the rhetorical complexity overshadows the romantic story. It is not very surprising that such a combination of rhetoric and romance – both intensely despised by so many historians of literature – has led to negative judgements of the Komnenian novels.[40] However, it is exactly here that we can find our key to understanding them: by accepting that rhetorical art was as attractive to the Byzantine audience as realistic features might be to modern readers. The prose novel, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, is a case in point:

37 On *theatra*, see Mullett, "Aristocracy and Patronage", and Marciniak, "Byzantine Theatron"; for an overview of the literary characteristics of the period, see Nilsson, "Komnenian literature".

38 Nilsson, "Discovering Literariness".

39 Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 471–72, ed. Conca, p. 436: ἀπόλλυμαι δείλαιος, οἴχομαι τάλας, / εἰ μηδὲ ταῦτα σὴν μαλάξῃ καρδίαν (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 425). Cf. the translation of ταῦτα in Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 425 ("these pleas"), and Burton, *A Byzantine Novel*, p. 133 ("these things").

40 See further below, p. 56.

this is a traditional love story in which the hero falls in love with the beautiful heroine, struggles with passion (ἔρως) vs restraint (σωφροσύνη), and eventually accepts his feelings and experiences a series of adventures on his way to a happy ending and marriage. The novel is a first-person narrative, told by the hero Hysminias from his point of view, exploring the sexual awakening of a young man. In this manner, the rhetorical skills of the author are used in order to depict and represent the emotional pathos of the hero; while the relationship of the young couple thus is in focus, the text simultaneously explores the relationships between nature and art, art and reality, reality and rhetoric.[41] The traditional plot is in this manner compressed in favour of the artistry of the text itself – its elaborate structure with repetitive patterns, combined with an intricate use of the hypotext (*Leucippe and Kleitophon*) and numerous allusions to other texts. The pleasure of the novel does not necessarily depend on the erotic action, but rather on the rhetorical quality of the text.[42]

A similar, yet different focus on rhetoric may be observed in the novel by Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*. With elements drawn from both Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius, this verse novel may be seen as a demonstration of rhetorical techniques, skilfully and carefully combined and presented as a rather complex plot, told by an omniscient narrator.[43] A clear indication of the novel's rhetorical character is the presence of Hermes as the protector of the loving couple.[44] Whereas such a role usually goes to more amorous deities, like Eros or Aphrodite, Hermes – the god of literary creation – appears to protect not only the young lovers but also the rhetorics of the work. Hermes thus appears to Rhodanthe in a dream, promising to unite her with her beloved (3, 69–75), i.e. promising to take the narration all the way to the happy end. We may compare to *Hysmine and Hysminias*, where Eros is the mischievous protector of the couple (and of Hysmine in particular), but at the end of which Hermes is called upon to preserve the story:

> So, if Zeus will not place our deeds among the stars, if Poseidon will not inscribe them in the waves, if Earth will not embody them in plants and flowers, our adventures will be set forth as if on imperishable tablets and slabs of adamant, with the pen of Hermes and ink and a tongue which

41 On art and nature in all four novels, see Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 65–68. For a recent study of the significance of descriptions of art in the novels by Makrembolites, see Chatterjee, "Ekphrasis, Epigrams, and Color".

42 Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*. See also Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, and Meunier, *Le roman byzantin*, esp. pp. 195–219.

43 Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, esp. pp. 50–57; Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 14–17.

44 Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 50–51; cf. also use of Hermes in Manasses, on which Roilos pp. 52–53.

> breathes the fire of rhetoric. And anyone from a later generation will be able to retell these matters and will be able to forge a golden image in words, like an imperishable statue.[45]

The passage offers a definite expression of one of the novel's main themes: the art of rhetoric.[46] At the same time, the appearance of Hermes and rhetoric here ties in with both the specific plot of *Hysmine and Hysminias* and the novelistic tradition. Hermes is indeed the protector of orators, but he also protects heralds, and Hysminias is the herald of Zeus – the function through which he meets and falls in love with Hysmine. The passage also contains reminiscences of *Daphnis and Chloe*, thus providing the work with an important link to the overall novelistic background.[47]

Returning to Prodromos, we find a number of such self-conscious comments on the process of writing and narrating.[48] Let us take a closer look at a passage in book 9 of *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, where the fathers of the young couple go to the Delphic Pythia to enquire about their children. Rhodanthe and Dosikles are, in fact, in Cyprus, reunited with each other but not yet with their parents, who worry about their fate. The Delphic oracle offers an immediate though confusing reply to the fathers.

> Why, paired parents, do you seek the twisting paths
> of your much-loved calf and tender heifer?
> By the sea-girt land, by the animal-nurturing island
> which fell to the Cyprus-born begetter of Desire, Aphrodite
> (a name either bestowed or taken),

45 Eumathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias* 11, 22.4, ed. Conca, p. 686: Τοίνυν εἰ Ζεὺς οὐ καταστερίσει τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς, εἰ Ποσειδῶν οὐ καταστηλογραφήσει τοῖς ὕδασιν, εἰ Γῆ μὴ καταφυτουργήσει τοῖς φυτοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἄνθεσιν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐν ἀμαράντοις ξύλοις καὶ λίθοις ἀδάμασιν Ἑρμοῦ γραφίδι καὶ μέλανι καὶ γλώσσῃ πῦρ πνεούσῃ ῥητορικὸν τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς στηλογραφηθήσεται, καί τις τῶν ὀψιγόνων καταρρητορεύσει ταῦτα καὶ ὡς ἀθανάτῳ στήλῃ τοῖς λόγοις ἀνδριάντα χαλκουργήσει κατάχρυσον (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 269 slightly revised). Cf. *Hysmine and Hysminias* 4, 20.3, ed. Conca, p. 558: ἡ γάρ τοι τοῦ ζωγράφου γραφὶς Ἑρμοῦ μοι ἀκόντιον, ὅλη κατεστομωμένη τοῖς ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων προβλήμασιν (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 207: "for the painter's brush, completely whetted by the paintings' queries, becomes Hermes' javelin for me").

46 Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 85–87; Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, pp. 75–77; Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, p. 60. On the closure of *Hysmine and Hysminias*, see now also Cupane, "Una passeggiata", esp. pp. 82–84.

47 Agapitos, "Poets and Painters", p. 183; Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, pp. 77–78.

48 See esp. *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* 6, 280 (cf. *Hysmine and Hysminias* 11.23.3) and 8, 520, commented in Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine novels*, p. 15, and Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 50–61.

> there beholding them, you will see where they were living, but in that
> country
> crown them with the wreaths of the trophy-bearing Kytherean;
> for Eros and Desire and the foam-born Kytherean
> have subdued them with the indissoluble bonds of iron bound on by
> the gods.[49]

It is not clear from the text whether the oracular decree is delivered orally or in writing, but it is as always obscure and ambiguous, and Rhodanthe's father is bound to misinterpret it. What is interesting to us is not that he misunderstands the Pythia – so do many characters in Greek literature – but the way in which he does so. He begins to weep, expecting his child to have been found dead, since he is "ignorantly putting a full stop after 'were living' / and then passing over what followed."[50] We must then draw the conclusion that Rhodanthe's father is either a bad listener or a bad reader, depending on how the oracle was delivered. We might of course imagine that he is upset and that his emotional state affects his judgement, but the expression used by Prodromos is "ignorantly" or "with no learning" (ἀμαθῶς), thus referring to the father's education rather than to his emotions.[51] The episode should accordingly be understood as a comment not only on the narrative as a written text, but also on the narrative situation as such – perhaps even a reminder to the audience: pay attention, or you might miss something!

This passage may thus be an indication that the novels belonged in an aural setting. Carefully constructed as written rhetorical compositions, they were most probably presented and read out loud in a performative context.[52] Again,

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49 Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* 9, 196–204, ed. Conca, p. 288: Τίπτε, δύω γενέτα, πολυηράτοιό τε μόσχου / πόρτιός θ' ἁπαλῆς σκολιὰς δίζεσθε κελεύθους; / χέρσῳ ὑφ' ἁλικλύστῳ, ζῳοτρόφον ποτὶ νᾶσον, / ἣν λάχε Κυπρογένεια, Πόθου γενέτειρ' Ἀφροδίτη / (ἠὲ παρασχομένη τόδε <τ>οὔνομα ἠὲ λαβοῦσα), / δερκόμενοι βιόωντας λεύσετε. ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πάτρης / στέψαθ' ὑπὸ στεφάνοισι τροπαιοφόρου Κυθερείης· / τοὺς γὰρ Ἔρως τε Πόθος τε καὶ Ἀφρογένεια Κυθήρη / δμήσατο θειοδέτοιο ἀλυκτοπέδῃσι σιδάρου. (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 147–48).

50 Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* 9, 214–15, ed. Conca, p. 288: στιγμὴν ἀμαθῶς εἰς τὸ 'βιοῦντας' τιθεὶς / κἄπειτα τοῖς ἔπειτα προσδιατρίβων (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 148).

51 Cf. other puns on education and "class-room humour" in Prodromos, on which see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 15, and the theme of learning in so many of Prodromos' satirical works, not the least the *Amathes*.

52 See Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting"; cf. Meunier, *Le Roman byzantin*, pp. 195–98, and the chapter by P. Roilos in this volume.

this is not unique for novels, but for most texts produced in the period. Rhetoric should not be understood only as a literary form or as a technique of persuasion, but as an act of communication, indeed a way of thinking and structuring the world.[53] The new situation for intellectuals in the Komnenian period, based to a large extent on the possibility of making a career in imperial administration thanks to orations or poems presented to the emperor or other influential aristocrats had great influence on the rhetorical expression. Texts were presented in front of an audience; they were not restricted to books addressed to a small number of individuals (even though the listening audience too, of course, might be limited).[54] The texts themselves reflect this by a number of specifically aural characteristics, such as sonoric effects sustaining semantic correspondences. Consider, for example, the first few lines in a passage in Makrembolites' novel, describing the not so subtle flirting between Hysmine and Hysminias:

> Κιρνᾷ μὲν οὖν ἡ κόρη συνήθως· ἐγὼ δ' ἀσυνήθως πίνω καὶ πίνων οὐ πίνω καὶ μὴ πίνων πίνω τὸν ἔρωτα … καὶ πίνων τὸν πόδα θλίβω τῆς κόρης, πόδα κατεπιθεὶς τὸν ἐμόν· ἡ δὲ σιγῶσα τῇ γλώσσῃ τῷ σχήματι λαλεῖ καὶ λαλοῦσα σιγᾷ·
>
> So the girl mixes the wine in the usual way, and I drink in a way that is not usual, and drinking yet I do not drink and in not drinking yet I drink down passion … and as I drink I squeeze the girl's foot, putting my foot on top of hers. She keeps silence with her tongue but her appearance speaks volumes and she is eloquent in her silence.[55]

Such sonoric effects were then, in the performative act, further enhanced by the voice of the rhetor: rhythm, intonation, cadence. This is where the "punctuation" in the novel by Prodromos belongs: in the performance of the text – the pause indicated by the written text, represented by the rhetor in his reading.

In addition to the sonoric effects, the structure of the novels itself also indicate that they were suited for reading sessions. All Komnenian novels, just like their ancient models, are divided into smaller units, 'books', of a length that

53 Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, p. 1.

54 On the performative aspects of Byzantine literature, see Bourbouhakis, "Rhetoric and Performance". On the audience of the novels, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 14 and n. 61; see also above, n. 20.

55 Eumathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias* 4, 1.1, ed. Conca, p. 542 (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 200).

could easily represent one reading session. While the ancient novelists were forced to divide their works into books or chapters because of the limited length of the scrolls, this limitation did not affect Byzantine authors using codices.[56] Accordingly the division had other functions, most probably to suit reading in portions. The episodic structure of the novels sustained such a practice, especially in combination with the carefully opened and closed books, never beginning or ending abruptly.[57] We may thus imagine a situation in which the novelists would read their works out loud to an audience consisting of the social and intellectual elite of Constantinople: imperial or aristocratic patrons with their entourage, along with the writer's colleagues and students. Presumably, the novels would have entertained the aristocracy while, at the same time, impressing the intellectuals.[58] The combination of romantic and adventurous content with sophisticated rhetorical form would have suited such a setting rather perfectly, especially if most listeners were already familiar with the ancient models and some or most of the other literary allusions inserted into the novels. Indeed, the audience's learning in general and their specific knowledge of the novelistic model in particular is probably what allowed the compression of the plot and the subversion of numerous motifs discussed above; the audience would still be able to appreciate both the rhetorical adaptation and the often humoristic twists of the motifs.

From what has been said here, it is clear that the extant novels belonged at the very centre of learning and literature in Komnenian Constantinople, written by learned authors belonging to intellectual circles and most probably sponsored by influential patrons. Yet, as pointed out at the beginning of this survey, the novels that have come down to us are different in focus and form and may have been composed for different occasions. That is to say, perhaps we should not confine ourselves to stating that the novels are rhetorical compositions aiming at displaying rhetorical skills. Most other texts in the 12th century have a function that cannot be identified with the form; the form is usually the means to say something, not the aim per se. Due to our lack of knowledge about the exact dating (as well as, in some cases, author and patron), along with the fragmentary character of the novel by Manasses, a full

56 Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting"; Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 14, n. 61. On the ancient problem, see Hägg, "Die Ephesiaka".

57 For an analysis of this in Makrembolites, see Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, pp. 93–96. On episodic structures suited for reading, see Bourbouhakis/Nilsson, "Byzantine Narrative", pp. 269–70.

58 Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 14–15.

analysis of this question is not (yet) possible. However, some thoughts regarding the function of form and theme deserve to be noted.

Let us consider, for instance, Eugenianos' novel *Drosilla and Charikles*, which lays a particular stress on marriage and marital ties. It has been pointed out by Elizabeth Jeffreys that this novel resembles an extended *epithalamium*, partly overlapping with the same author's *epithalamium* for Stephanos Komnenos, one of Eugenianos' students, who married in 1156. If the two compositions can both be linked to the wedding of Stephanos, this provides us with a possible date for the novel (some ten years later than has been suggested by other scholars) while also offering us a possible function: a wedding celebration in the form of a love novel, combining ancient erotic topoi with New Testament references to marriage.[59] It might be tempting to imagine a similar marital function for Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, written some twenty years earlier, since Prodromos too wrote an *epithalamium*: it was composed for the wedding of the two sons of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios, the dedicatee of the novel.[60] The possibility that Prodromos was also stimulated by this event to write his novel is attractive but cannot be supported by any other evidence than the novel's more general focus on marriage – indeed a primary focus of any novel, ancient or Byzantine.[61]

The many references to rhetoric and learning, already discussed above, seem to provide us with different clues as to the meaning or function of *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, and this particular character should be considered in light of Prodromos' other writings, such as the satirical dialogues in a Lucianic vein, making fun of intellectual pretence and philosophical disguise.[62] This is a novel that proves modern readers wrong when assuming that novelistic discourse is always light and entertaining; to our mind comes rather the words of Eustathios of Thessalonike, excerpting and commenting on the *Odyssey* in his famous *Parekbolai*: "For this is what rhetorical sharpness is: depth of thought in superficial simplicity."[63] The depth of thought that Prodromos represents, cer-

59 See Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 342. On Christian allusions and motifs in the novels, see also Burton, "Reviving the Pagan Greek Novel in a Christian World".

60 For details and further references, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 8.

61 Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 8, cf. p. 165.

62 See Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, esp. pp. 286–88, and cf. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, pp. 270–76.

63 Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Parekbolai on the Odyssey* 1379.44–45, ed. and trans. Cullhed (*Eustathios of Thessalonike, Parekbolai on Homer's Odyssey*, diss. Uppsala 2014), pp. 6–7: τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ὀξύτης ῥητορική· νοημάτων βαθύτης ἐν ἐπιπολαζούσῃ ἁπλότητι (on the *Odyssey* in comparison with the *Iliad*).

tainly lies within the rhetorical-philosophical tradition and its manifestations in court circles in the 12th century, but work still remains to be done here.

It may seem that the Komnenian novels, with their male authors and primarily 'male' (learned, intellectual) milieu, had little to do with women, except for their depictions of love, marriage, and beautiful heroines. However, a few imperial women held central positions within the intellectual circles of Constantinople, and one of them can be linked to at least two novelists: sevastokratorissa[64] Irene. Irene, widowed sister-in-law of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80) presided over one of the literary salons in the first half of the 12th century.[65] Prodromos wrote several poems recording events in her family's life, but he also composed directly for her, consoling her on her widowhood (1142) and presenting her with an illustrated grammar.[66] Manasses wrote his large chronicle *Synopsis Chronike*, a composition on verse in a largely 'novelistic' style, and a poem on astrology for Irene (ca. 1145); his novel *Aristandros and Kallithea* was written in the same meter as the chronicle and possibly in the same period and for the same patron.[67] There is no way for us to prove that women such as Irene and her peers – imperial women, sometimes of foreign origin, who were active in the *theatra* of Constantinople by the mid-12th century – had a direct influence on the Komnenian revival of novels, but two things are certainly worth noting: these women were active in circles in which the novels were composed, and the novels evolve around imagery that would be relevant in an imperial woman's life: marriage, ceremonial, and learning.[68] The central position of resourceful heroines discussed above and the metaliterary relation created between Drosilla and the reader in book 6 of *Drosilla and Charikles* – making us smile together at the clumsy and ignorant Kallidemos – may suggest a situation in which the female patrons were more than just passive listeners. This is another area where further investigations may yield

64 The aulic title sebastokrator, which was created by Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) to honour his brother Isaac, was later applied to their wives in the feminine form sebastokratorissa.

65 On Irene, see Jeffreys "The sebastokratorissa Irene as patron", summarizing and complementing earlier studies; on her possibly Norman origin, see also E. and M. Jeffreys, "Who was Eirene the sevastokratorissa", pp. 57–65. It has been suggested that Makrembolites's novel may have been related to Anna Komnena's circle, focusing on philosophy; see McAlister, "Aristotle on the Dream".

66 Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 9–10, with references.

67 Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 275–76. This is a plausible though not proven interpretation of the material that has come down to us. On the 'novelistic' character of Manasses' chronicle, see Nilsson, "Discovering Literariness in the Past".

68 For recent and useful essays on all three aspects, with references to previous research, see Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*.

interesting results, not the least if considered in light of the contemporary French situation with Eleanor of Aquitaine commissioning romances from Chrétien de Troyes.[69]

3 Previous Research and Future Challenges

There was a time when the Komnenian works discussed here were seen only as bad imitations of the ancient novels, being of no interest for scholars who wanted to understand the ancient tradition, unsuitable for serious studies of Byzantine literature, and irrelevant for the study of the Western romance and modern novel. In the context of the present volume it might be of interest to remind ourselves of the way in which Erwin Rohde, renowned classical scholar of the 18th century and praised by Mikhail Bakhtin for having written "the best book on the history of the ancient novel",[70] described the 12th-century adaptations:

> Für uns haben sie, vom antiken Ufer aus betrachtet, nur als vereinzelte Nachklänge allerspätester griechischer Poesie ein schwaches Interesse; ein kurzer Blick auf sie und ihre Werke darf uns genügen; und was könnte auch zu längerem Verweilen locken?[71]

Rohde's brief look resulted in, for instance, a description of the novel of Makrembolites as a composition written by an Achilles Tatius gone mad.[72] This kind of judgment was indeed symptomatic for generations of scholars, and up until quite recently, the novels were described as tedious and artless not only by classicists but also by Byzantinists.[73]

Needless to say, scholarship on the Komnenian novels has indeed undergone a major transformation over the last few decades. With recent developments in both Byzantine Studies and literary criticism we are ready to leave the judgemental attitude behind. We should remember, though, that the early studies remain an important part of our research history and their attitudes need to be taken into account as we look at the overall development of the

69 See Jeffreys, "The Comnenian background" and "The Wild Beast".
70 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 4.
71 Rohde, *Der Griechische Roman*, pp. 521–22.
72 Ibid., p. 526.
73 See, e.g., Mango, *Byzantium*, p. 237; cf. Jeffreys, "The Labours of the Twelve Months", p. 314, on the novel of Makrembolites as "perhaps more artless than artfull".

field. A first change in approach was seen in the late 1970s with the pioneering study of Margaret Alexiou, analysing *Hysmine and Hysminias* from literary and psychological perspectives,[74] and some ten years later there was a clear shift in attitude as Roderick Beaton's *The Medieval Greek Romance* was published (1989 with a second edition in 1996). With its inclusion of all Byzantine novels and romances, this monograph put focus not only on the Medieval Greek tradition of romantic writing, but also on the important research that had been conducted in the last few decades. Though criticized from some angles,[75] Beaton's study certainly brought about a stronger interest in and intensified work on the Komnenian novels. It has been followed by a long series of studies concerning various perspectives of the novels,[76] and also by a more frequent inclusion of Byzantine material in collective volumes on the ancient novel,[77] as well as a growing interest in comparative studies of medieval narration and romance.[78]

Looking at scholarship of the last two decades or so, we may note at least two significant developments in especially three areas. First, the novels have been studied both in relation to their roots in the ancient tradition *and* in light of their contemporary context in 12th-century Constantinople.[79] This is crucial for our understanding of the composition and performance of the Komnenian novels; we cannot comprehend them if we consider them from only one angle. Moreover, we must allow for the novels to be seen not as marginalised exceptions to an otherwise serious and chaste Byzantine literature, but as an influential mode of writing with a widespread use in the Komnenian period.[80]

74 Alexiou, "A Critical Reappraisal"; Alexiou developed this analysis quite a few years later in *After Antiquity*, pp. 111–27.

75 Most notably by Panagiotis A. Agapitos and Ole L. Smith in their book-length review *The Study of Medieval Greek Romance*. Beaton addressed their criticism (as well as that of other scholars) in an afterword to the second edition, pp. 207–09.

76 It is impossible to offer here a complete bibliography of the Byzantine novel. In addition to the works included in the bibliography of this essay, I would like refer to the fuller bibliography in Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*.

77 See, e.g., MacAlister, "Byzantine Developments" in *Greek Fiction* (1994); Beaton, "The Byzantine Revival of the Ancient Novel" in *The Novel in the Ancient World* (1996); contributions by Harder, Nilsson and Aerts in Panayotakis/Zimmerman/Keulen, *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*; Burton, "Byzantine Readers" in Whitmarsh (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*.

78 For a recent example of such an approach, see Agapitos/Mortensen (eds.), *Medieval Narrative between History and Fiction*.

79 In addition to works mentioned above, for these two perspectives see also Jouanno, "A Byzantine Novelist Staging" and Jeffreys, "The Novels of mid-twelfth-century".

80 For a recent attempt to show this, see Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance*.

Further studies of the 12th century with its literary, sociocultural and political situation, will help us understand even better the position of the novelists and the function of their works.

Second, the novels have been considered from comparative perspectives, in relation to both the Western and the Eastern traditions. The former perspective was indeed explored quite early, with the important observation that the Komnenian novels may be seen in relation to the French *romans d'Antiquité*, or even the *Roman de la Rose*.[81] Recent studies have pursued both the Western connection and the previously rather neglected Eastern links,[82] which may help us see the Byzantine works in a completely new light. Whereas there has been a strong inclination to see such cross-cultural relations in terms of influence in one direction or the other, there is now a tendency to use comparative methods in order to understand these complex processes, an approach that seems more fruitful and more likely to bring new results.[83]

Turning to an area that to a larger extent remains to be explored, we find the role played by the Komnenian novels in the later Greek tradition, but also their Nachleben in the West. As for the latter, recent studies indicate that Makrembolites' novel *Hysmine and Hysminias* enjoyed a rich afterlife in 18th-century France, which means that further studies of other novels and other contexts would most probably be worth pursuing.[84] As for the Komnenian novel in the later Greek tradition, there has been only a limited interest in such perspectives; a closer study could probably come up with interesting results, especially if we take into account not only the novels as 'sources' for specific texts, but also other kinds of transmission and adaptation. Take, for example, *Aristandros and Kallithea*, the novel by Constantine Manasses that has been preserved only in excerpt collections, but also in prose paraphrases by Maximos Planoudes, writing in the late 13th century. In a quest for 'the complete novel', such material may be of marginal interest, but from the perspective of recep-

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81 For a possible influence of Byzantine novels on Western romance, see Polyakova , "K voprosu o vizantino-francuzskix literaturnyx"; Jeffreys, "The Comnenian Background" and "The Wild Beast"; for the opposite perspective, see Cupane, "*Eros basileus*", "Byzantinisches Erotikon" and "Metamorphosen des Eros", along with C. Jouanno, "Women in Byzantine Novels", pp. 159–60 on Komnenian novels and the French *chanson de geste*.

82 Meunier, *Le Roman byzantin*, argues for a connection between *Hysmine and Hysminias* and the Arabic fairy tale tradition. Beaton, "Fiction in the twelfth century", by contrast, explores the relation between the same novel and *Cligès* by Chrétien de Troyes.

83 See, e.g., Agapitos, "In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands".

84 Nilsson, "*Les Amours d'Ismène & Isménias*" ; Jouanno, "Fortune d'un roman byzantin".

tion and adaptation it is highly interesting.[85] Consider the following two passages, describing the powers of Eros – driving force of the novelistic plot.[86]

> Eros does not only have power over creatures that swim and fly,
> not only over those that traverse the air and the dry land,
> but he also controls rocks and plants
> and looses his darts against creatures of different species.[87]

> That Eros does not rule only over the gods in heaven but also those of the sea; and he unites those not of the same species, as he unites Zeus with mortal women, Aphrodite with Adonis and Anchises; and he makes Alpheios fall in love with Arethousa, and joins a snake with an eel; and moreover iron loves magnetic stone and the male date-palm loves the female.[88]

A number of interesting questions arise here. Why was this very passage excerpted to begin with? How was it paraphrased by Planoudes and for what purpose? What other sources did Planoudes add from? How was it perceived of by contemporary and later readers? We still have few answers to these questions, but they would certainly add to our understanding of both the transmission of Komnenian novels and the approach of someone like Planoudes.

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85 See above, n. 3.

86 For studies of the imagery of Eros in the Komnenian novels, see, e.g., Cupane, "Eros basileus" and "Metamorphosen des Eros"; from a socio-political perspective, see Magdalino, "Eros the King" and Christoforatou, "Figuring Eros".

87 Constantine Manasses, *Aristandros and Kallithea* fr. 21, 1–4, ed. Conca, p. 696: Ἔρως οὐ μόνον ἐν πλωτοῖς καὶ πτερωτοῖς ἰσχύει, / οὐκ ἐν ἀεροβάμοσιν οὐδ᾽ ἐν τοῖς χερσοπόροις, / ἀλλὰ καὶ λίθων καὶ φυτῶν αὐτῶν κατακαυχᾶται / καὶ βέλος ἐπαφίησι καὶ τοῖς ἀνομοφύλοις (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 288). Similar depictions of Eros appears in the other novels, ancient and Byzantine; see e.g. *Hysmine and Hysminias* 2, 7.2–3 on which Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*, pp. 103–10 and 202–08.

88 Planoudes §4 (Constantine Manasses, *Aristandros and Kallithea* fr 21a), ed. Conca, pp. 696–97: Ὅτι Ἔρως οὐ μόνον τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ δεσπόζει θεῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ θαλάσσης αὐτῆς· καὶ τὰ μὴ ὁμόφυλα μίγνυσιν, ὡς Δία θνηταῖς γυναιξί, καὶ Ἀφροδίτην Ἀδώνιδι καὶ Ἀγχίσῃ· καὶ Ἀλφειὸν ἐρᾶν Ἀρεθούσης ποιεῖ, καὶ ὄφιν συνάπτει μυραίνῃ· καὶ δὴ καὶ σίδηρος ἐρᾷ τῆς μαγνήτιδος λίθου, καὶ φοίνιξ ἄρρην θηλείας (trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 288–89). For the examples used by Planoudes here, see e.g. *Leucippe and Clitophon* 1, 17.2–3.

Another area that would probably be worth exploring in more detail is the relation between the Komnenian novel and the Palaiologan romance.[89] Few would deny that the motifs and themes of the learned novels functioned as a point of departure, or at least a background, for the vernacular romance, but there has often been more focus on the differences than on the similarities. Let us, as our final example, briefly compare the closing passage of *Hysmine and Hysminias* to that of the Palaiologan *Livistros and Rhodamne*, just to consider the potential of comparative studies also within the Greek romance tradition.

As discussed above, Makrembolites ends his novel by an evocation of rhetoric, a wish to turn his dramatic experiences into a written work: "our adventures will be set forth as if on imperishable tablets and slabs of adamant, with the pen of Hermes and ink and a tongue which breathes the fire of rhetoric".[90] The very closure then turns to the audience's reaction with an echo from Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*:

> Whatever in mankind is most responsive to passion will appreciate all the charming passion in this story; whatever is chaste and virginal will respond to its restraint; whatever is more inclined to sympathy will pity our misfortunes, and so memory of us will be undying. We will grace this story and adorn this book with erotic charm and everything else that decorates books and beautifies words. And the title of this book will be "The Adventures of Hysmine and me, Hysminias".[91]

The closure of *Hysmine and Hysminias* thus intertwines the ancient novelistic background with the rhetorical and performative context of the Komnenian

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89 For a brief overview, see Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 147–54. For further references to research on the Palaiologan romance, I refer to the contribution by C. Cupane in this volume pp. 95–126.

90 Eumathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias* 11, 22.4; for Greek text, see above, n. 45.

91 Eumathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias* 11, 23: Ὅσον μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐρωτικώτερον, τῶν πολλῶν ἐρωτικῶν χαρίτων ἡμᾶς ἀποδέξεται, καὶ ὅσον παρθενικὸν καὶ σεμνότερον, τῆς σωφροσύνης πάλιν ἀγάσεται· ὅσον δὲ συμπαθέστερον, ἐλεήσει τῶν δυστυχημάτων ἡμᾶς, καὶ οὕτως ἡμῖν ἔσται τὰ τῆς μνήμης ἀθάνατα. Ἡμεῖς δὲ καταχαριτώσομεν τὴν γραφὴν καὶ ὅλην βίβλον κατακοσμήσομεν καὶ χάρισιν ἐρωτικαῖς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα βίβλους κοσμοῦσι καὶ τοὺς λόγους κατακαλλύνουσι· κλῆσις δ' ἔσται τῇ βίβλῳ τὸ καθ' Ὑσμίνην δρᾶμα καὶ τὸν Ὑσμινίαν ἐμέ. Cf. *Daphnis and Chloe*, Prologue: "… and something for mankind to possess and enjoy. It will cure the sick, comfort the distressed, stir the memory of those who have loved, and educate those who haven't". (trans. by Ch. Gill in Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, p. 289).

novel, displaying it in a manner that is quite obvious to the learned audience. Turning to the vernacular *Livistros and Rhodamne*, composed in a different setting and probably at least a century later, a variation of the same motif is clearly detectable.

> But who will tell of the toils that I endured in this world,
> What other person will tell of my hardships,
> what other person will narrate my painful bitterness,
> who will tell of my injuries, write of my sufferings
> who will narrate in detail my very own bitter experiences?[92]
> …
> and, simply, any lover who should wish to describe these events,
> let him adapt them as he pleases and desires.[93]

The passage does not only mirror and adapt the novelistic tradition, but the two last verses reflect and express the tradition itself: anyone can rework the material to his fancy.[94] We should take this as an indication of the awareness of the author and his understanding of the tradition in which he inscribes his work. Moreover, we should take it as a call to further investigate that same tradition in all its winding forms and manifold off-springs, because more remains to be found.

We have certainly come a long way in our understanding of the Komnenian novel. We can look back at the period of 18th- and early 19th-century disdain as being part of our past, while we have just began to consider the early modern appreciation of the novels and the implication that might have for the development of the modern novel. Recent studies and editions, along with the important translations into English by Elizabeth Jeffreys, put us in a much better position to examine the texts from a growing number of perspectives: literary, sociocultural, contemporary, diachronical, and comparative, to mention but a few. The love stories of the past are indeed still with us – we respond

92 *Livistros and Rhodamne*, *Redaction* α 4590–4593, ed. Agapitos, p. 432: ἐμοὺς δὲ πόνους τίς εἰπῇ τοὺς ἔπαθα εἰς τὸν κόσμον, / τίς ἄλλος ἀφηγήσηται τοὺς πονοπικρασμούς μου, / τίς εἴπῃ τὰς κακώσεις μου, τὰ πάθη μου συγγράψῃ, / τίς καταμέρος τὰς ἐμὰς ἀφηγηθῇ πικρίας; (trans. Agapitos, “In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands”, p. 307).

93 *Livistros and Rhodamne, Redaction* α 4600–01, ed. Agapitos, p. 432: καὶ εἴτις ἁπλῶς ἐρωτικὸς θελήσῃ νὰ τὰ ἐκφράσῃ, / ὡς θέλει καὶ ὀρέγεται νὰ τὰ μετασκευάσῃ (trans. Agapitos, “In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands”, p. 307).

94 For a discussion of this explicit encouragement to adapt the story, see Agapitos, “In Rhomaian, Frankish and Persian Lands”, pp. 307–08. Cf. Cupane, “Una passeggiata”.

to their passion, refashion them as we wish, yet analyse them with increasing understanding and respect.[95]

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CHAPTER 3

In the Mood of Love: Love Romances in Medieval Persian Poetry and their Sources

Julia Rubanovich

Introduction

Love romances present a substantial output in the medieval Persian literary tradition. They flourished mostly in the courtly milieu, the earliest extant texts coming from the eastern parts of the Iranian world and dating from the reign of Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 998–1030) whose capital became a significant centre of the dialogue among various intellectual traditions.[1] The rise of the romance brought about the gradual decline of the heroic epic, which reflected a "growing disaffection with the social values embodied in epic",[2] as well as changes in literary taste.[3] Formally the versified romances are written in the *mathnavī* form[4] and encompass a variety of poetic metres. In most cases their immediate sources are elusive.

In what follows I offer a chronological survey of available texts confining myself to the textual production of the 11th–13th centuries. At the end I present a synthesis of possible sources and influences on the medieval Persian love romances discussed in the survey.

1 See Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 79–80.

2 Ibid., pp. 80–81.

3 In addition to courtly love romance, another strand which replaced the heroic epic was a kind of chivalric geste, i.e., tales of heroes whose exploits bore a legendary and fantastic character entwined with romantic adventures. Post-Firdausian epics belong to this category. See Molé, "Épopée"; de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/2, pp. 562–67, 568–76, and most recently and exhaustively, Van Zutphen, *Farāmarz*, pp. 62–138.

4 *Mathnavī*, meaning "doubled", is a Perso-Arabic term for a long poem in which every distich (*bayt*) has an internal rhyme that changes with each following line.

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The Survey

a) Romantic Poems by ʿUnṣurī. *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*

Abū al-Qāsim Ḥasan b. Aḥmad ʿUnṣurī (d. 1039/40) was a prominent poet at the court of Maḥmūd of Ghazna.[5] Bearing the venerable title *malik al-shuʿarāʾ* ("the poet laureate"), ʿUnṣurī exerted substantial influence among his fellow court poets and was considered primarily as a masterful panegyrist. Besides panegyric odes (*qaṣīda*s) devoted chiefly to his patrons, Sultan Maḥmūd, the latter's brothers and minister, ʿUnṣurī is credited with composing three poems *Khing but-u Surkh but* ("White Idol and Red Idol"), *Shād-bahr-u ʿAyn al-Ḥayāt* ("Happy of Fate and Spring of Life"), and *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā* ("The Ardent Lover and the Virgin"), all three titled according to the names of their male and female protagonists.[6]

ʿUnṣurī's poems have survived only partially: poetic treatises and lexicological works preserved a handful of verses from the *Khing but-u Surkh but* and about sixty isolated verses from the *Shād-bahr-u ʿAyn al-Ḥayāt*.[7] As for the *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*, more than 500 couplets were recovered altogether, which enables reconstruction of the subject-matter and source of the poem. The poem seems to have started fading into obscurity in the 13th century,[8] or even earlier, to which the discovery of a manuscript fragment used to stiffen the binding of an Arabic theological manuscript dated 1132 bears eloquent

5 Information on his life is scarce; for summary, see EIr, "ʿOnṣori".

6 A certain connection exists between ʿUnṣurī's three poems and the prose works – no longer extant – of his contemporary Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī (d. after 1050). Bīrūnī mentions that he translated three stories "out of folly and ridicule" (*min al-hazl wa al-sakhf*). One may only speculate about Bīrūnī's source; it seems most likely that the three books were a translation of ʿUnṣurī's poems from Persian verse into Arabic prose. In that case Bīrūnī turns out to be the first known reader (and critic) of these poems. *Apud* Shafīʿ, *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*, pp. 4–5; cf. de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, pp. 232–33. See Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, p. 19, referring to Strohmaier, "Al-Bîrûnî".

7 Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*; EIr, "ʿOnṣori". For the verses supposedly belonging to *Shād-bahr-u ʿAyn al-Ḥayāt*, see ʿUnṣurī, *Dīvān*, ed. M. Dabīr-siyāqī, Tehran 1984, pp. 363–70. Some clues as to the nature of the two extinct poems can be gathered from a folk prose romance (*dāstān*), the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma* ("The Book of Alexander"; see *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Afshār, pp. 288–89; 430–31). On the compilation and redaction of this text, see in detail Rubanovich, "Reconstruction of a Storytelling Event"; eadem, "Tracking the *Shahnama* Tradition", pp. 23–24, as well as the chapter on the Persian Alexander tradition in this volume p. 224 and n. 27 there. For a full translation of the relevant passages, see Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, pp. 197–99.

8 See Shafīʿ, *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*, pp. 7–10. One of the possible explanations for this is a conspicuously pagan character of the poem which made it unpalatable to the later Muslim audience; see ibid., p. 9.

testimony. Its plot, however, has been quite successfully reconstructed on the basis of 372 verses retained in the manuscript fragment just mentioned, some 150 distichs culled from old lexical works and a rather lengthy prose passage from yet another *dāstān*, the *Dārāb-nāma* ("The Book of Darius"), where the heroine ʿAdhrā herself tells her story.[9]

The narrative begins with the marriage of Fuluqrāṭ, king of the island of Shāmis/Shāmus, to a daughter of prosperous King *Aqrāṣus, from which union ʿAdhrā is born. The girl turns out to be remarkable, growing and developing extraordinary quickly, so that by the age of two she starts to learn and by seven becomes an astronomer and dexterous scribe. She excels in the martial arts as well, her father designating her commander-in-chief of his army. On another island a youth Vāmiq suffers the intrigues of his vicious stepmother – a motif the poem has in common with the well known *Book of Sindbād*;[10] he decides to flee with his friend Ṭūfān and sails off to Shāmis/Shāmus. There Vāmiq and ʿAdhrā first meet while visiting a temple and instantly fall in love with each other. Vāmiq is brought to Fuluqrāṭ's palace and given his protection. Although admiring Vāmiq for his intellect and eloquence, ʿAdhrā's father opposes their bond and the youth is made to swear he will not pursue his love. A war with some enemy breaks out, during which Fuluqrāṭ is executed, while Vāmiq and ʿAdhrā are taken captive. She is then sold into slavery, spending four years apart from Vāmiq. Falling into the hands of a kind and pious merchant, ʿAdhrā is set free and probably returns to her homeland. Whether she reunites with her soul-mate Vāmiq remains a matter for speculation.[11]

The connection of the poem with Hellenistic novels has long been recognised on the basis of apparently Greek names (Fuluqrāṭ = Polykrates; island of Shāmis/Shāmus = island of Samos; *Aqrāṣus = Kroisos)[12] and common Greek motifs. Its source was ultimately identified as the Greek historical novel of

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9 The manuscript fragment was first edited by Shafīʿ who had discovered it in the 1950s (see Shafīʿ, *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*, edition, pp. 1–41); this edition was later amended, commented upon and translated into English by Hägg and Utas (see Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, pp. 80–143). For the passage in the *Dārāb-nāma*, see Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Dh. Ṣafā, vol. 1, Tehran 1965, pp. 209–10; English translation is in Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, pp. 147–48. On the *Dārāb-nāma*, see the chapter on Persian Alexander tradition in this volume, pp. 216–18, 227–29. I am examining the *Dārāb-nāma* which demonstrates strong affinity to the Greek novel tradition, in my forthcoming book *Alexander the Great in Medieval Persian Folk Tradition* (Brill). In the plot summary of *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā* below I rely on the reconstruction in Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, pp. 213–50. The asterisk denotes the editors' emendation.

10 See on this the chapter by B. Krönung in the present volume.

11 On possible endings, see Utas, "ʿAdhrā", pp. 437–39.

12 See Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, pp. 134–43, 153–83 and a conspectus on pp. 184–87.

Metiochos and Parthenope, which too survived only in fragments.[13] The stages and ways of transmission between the Hellenistic novel and its Persian offshoot are impossible to determine with any certainty. Judging by the transformations of Greek names, the closest chain to ʿUnṣurī's work seems to be a written Arabic intermediary.[14]

Stylistically, *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā* is still conterminous with heroic epic rather than later romantic poems. Besides retaining the *mutaqārib* metre typical of epic, the narrative develops through action at the expense of depicting characters' inner states. The external orientation of the narration can be seen in the manner in which characters and motivation are subordinated to action and in the negligible role that dialogue and monologue play in the narrative.[15]

As for further ramifications of *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*, numerous and diverse versions appeared in Persian, Turkish, Kashmiri and Pashto, the two earliest (and extinct) ones dating to the second half of the 11th century (by Faṣīḥī-yi Jurjānī) and the 13th century (by Amīr Farkhārī). Most of the versions bear only slight resemblance to ʿUnṣurī's poem, their authors probably never having had a direct access to the original. The 16th-century Ottoman Turkish version by Lāmiʿī (d. 1531) serves as a good illustration: although referring to ʿUnṣurī as his predecessor, Lāmiʿī presents a significantly different story, where Vāmiq takes the place of ʿAdhrā as the main hero, at the same time preserving some parallels with ʿUnṣurī's tale.[16] All in all, more than twenty versions bearing the title *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*, at least two of which are in prose, are known.[17]

b) *Varqa va Gulshāh* by ʿAyyūqī

The poem, titled according to its eponymous heroes, counts some 2,200 verses and is undated.[18] Lingua-stylistic evidence places its composition in the early

13 For the survey of the question, see Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, pp. 10–22.

14 Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, p. 201; for discussion of other, less plausible alternatives, see ibid., pp. 193–203.

15 For discussion, see Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 82–85.

16 See Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, pp. 204–7.

17 For the content summary of principal versions, see Shafīʿ, *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*, pp. 35–126; see also Hägg and Utas, *Virgin*, pp. 203–12; Utas, "ʿAdhrā", p. 438.

18 The poem has survived in a unique illuminated manuscript, dated not later than the 13th century, which comprises seventy-one miniatures in colour. For an edition, see ʿAyyūqī, *Varqa va Gulshāh*, ed. Ṣafā. For French and German translations, see respectively Melikian-Chirvani, "Roman", 99–214; *Warqa und Gulschah. Liebesepos von Ayyuqi*, trans. A. Lavizzari, Zürich 1992. For an analysis of the miniatures, see Melikian-Chirvani, "Roman", pp. 51–98 (reproductions on pp. 215–46).

11th century.[19] The poet ʿAyyūqī, otherwise obscure and known only from self-references in the body of the poem,[20] probably dedicated his work to Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna, although other possible patrons can not be excluded.[21]

The poem narrates the story of two cousins Varqa and Gulshāh of the Shayba tribe who, growing up together, fall in love already during their school-time. During the betrothal ceremony, Gulshāh is abducted by the chief of a neighbouring tribe, but is brought back by Varqa after a series of merciless battles, in which Varqa's father is killed and Varqa's riches are ransacked. His impoverishment causes him to postpone the wedding and ask for help from his uncle Mundhir, the ruler of Yaman (roughly identifiable with Yemen). Concluding a pact with Gulshāh's father that he keeps his daughter for Varqa till his return, the youth heads for far-off Yaman. After numerous obstacles, Varqa acquires the riches and returns to his tribe, only to learn that Gulshāh's father has broken the pact and given his daughter in marriage to the King of Shām (roughly identifiable as Syria). Inconsolable Varqa follows her to the kingdom of Shām, where Gulshāh's husband, the King of Shām, allows the lovers to meet and converse. Touched by their pure and sorrowful love, he proposes divorcing Gulshāh; Varqa, however, humbled by the King's kindness, refuses and leaves Gulshāh with her husband. On his way back home he dies of grief and is soon followed by Gulshāh, who breathes her last breath on her beloved's grave. They become paragons of chastity and fidelity in the eyes of the world, their grave turning into a place of pilgrimage for both Muslims and Jews. When the Prophet Muḥammad becomes aware of the wondrous story, he offers to resurrect the two lovers, provided the Jews convert to Islam; the latter agree, and Varqa and Gulshāh are restored to life and finally united.

ʿAyyūqī explicitly mentions that he read this "heart-pleasing story" in the tales and books of the Arabs,[22] boasting that he was the first to render it "in this particular metre and manner", i.e. in Persian.[23] The story is indeed of Arabic provenance and is based on the pre-Islamic love tale in prose of ʿUrwa b. Ḥizām al-ʿUdhrī, an Arab poet (d. around 650 or later), and his cousin ʿAfrāʾ.[24]

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19 See recently, Ṣādiqī, "Dar-bāra-yi *Varqa va Gulshāh*", pp. 198–202.

20 Two verses unrelated to the poem are attributed to ʿAyyūqī in one of the manuscripts of Asadī-yi Ṭūsī's lexicological dictionary *Lughat-i Furs* (11th century); however, whether this is the same poet remains uncertain; see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, p. 77.

21 On this, see ʿAyyūqī, *Varqa va Gulshāh*, ed. Ṣafā, introduction, pp. 4–5; Khaleghi-Motlagh, "ʿAyyūqī", p. 167; de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, pp. 77–78 and n. 1.

22 ʿAyyūqī, *Varqa va Gulshāh*, ed. Ṣafā, pp. 5, 122.

23 Ibid., p. 4.

24 For a thorough thematic comparison of the Arabic and Persian stories, see Ghulām-Ḥusaynzāda et al., "Barrasī"; also Melikian-Chirvani, "Roman", pp. 22–25.

The story of ʿUrwa and ʿAfrāʾ was well known already during the early Umayyad period (second half of the 7th century) and existed in various versions.[25] It reflects the literary theme of ʿUdhrī love (*al-ḥubb al-ʿudhrī*) in classical Arabic poetry and prose, which emerged from an elegiac amatory genre among the poets of the Arabian ʿUdhra tribe in the Umayyad period.[26] Traces of elegiac poetry can be discerned in ten lyric pieces inserted in the narrative of the *Varqa va Gulshāh* which are mostly put in the mouths of the beloved couple and devoted to the pain of separation and vicissitudes of fate.[27] In stylistic terms, the lyric passages deviate from the action-oriented narration by conveying an array of emotions, thus to some extent removing the poem from the strict conventions of the heroic epic.[28]

Notwithstanding a discernible common pattern in the stories about ʿUdhrī poets and their beloved in the *Varqa va Gulshāh* and the inserted lyric pieces,[29] the romance departs from this genre not only in its happy, missionary-like ending, but also in its pronounced epic characteristics. The narrative is laden with lengthy epic scenes possessing manifest epic motifs, such as an unforeseen night-time attack (*shabīkhūn*), one-to-one combat, a change of weapons during the fight, boasting, name requesting, and perhaps most significantly, Gulshāh being a woman-warrior.[30] The emphasis on the epic constituent seems to reflect the mixed nature of love romances as a genre in 10th–11th-centuries Persian literature.

It is worth mentioning the legacy of *Varqa va Gulshāh*: in the 19th and early 20th centuries, its versions were widely lithographed in Iran and India for

25 For content summaries and their Arabic sources, see Bauer, "ʿUrwa b. Ḥizām".

26 On ʿUdhrī poetry, see Jacobi, "ʿU<u>dh</u>rī"; Bürgel, "Love", pp. 91–96. See also below, the discussion on Laylī and Majnūn in Niẓāmī's work, who were another famous pair of ʿUdhrī lovers.

27 See ʿAyyūqī, *Varqa va Gulshāh*, ed. Ṣafā, pp. 13, 15, 17, 20, 27, 75, 81, 108, 110, 112. Although composed in the same metre as the rest of the poem, these pieces are cast in monorhyme, following a pattern that is later customary for the *ghazal* genre.

28 For a brief discussion, see Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 83–85.

29 On the common pattern, see Jacobi, "ʿU<u>dh</u>rī", p. 830.

30 See, e.g., ʿAyyūqī, *Varqa va Gulshāh*, ed. Ṣafā, pp. 10, 19–20, 20–27, 28, 29–32, 32–43, 47–48, 59–65. Melikian-Chirvani is especially keen to show the resemblance of *Varqa va Gulshāh* to 10th- and 11th-century Persian poems at the expense of Arab(ic) tradition; see Melikian-Chirvani, "Roman", pp. 28–50. The figure of the woman warrior is known to Byzantine epic as well; see the chapter on Digenis Akritis by C. Jouanno in the present volume.

popular distribution.[31] In addition, it gained popularity in the Turkic milieu, represented there by four recensions at least, the oldest dating to 1371.[32]

c) *Vīs-u Rāmīn* by Gurgānī

Fakhr al-Dīn Asʿad Gurgānī, native of Gurgān to the east of the Caspian, flourished around the middle of the 11th century and is celebrated for his romantic poem *Vīs-u Rāmīn* ("Vīs and Rāmīn").[33] He wrote the poem between 1050 and 1055 while staying in Isfahan and dedicated it to the Saljūq governor of the city ʿAmīd Abū al-Fatḥ Muẓaffar, who commissioned the composition.[34]

The story tells of the vicissitudes of the lovers Vīs and Rāmīn. Powerful King Mubad of Marv proposes to Shahrū, Queen of Māhābād, who is married and mother to several sons, the eldest, Vīrū, being the most successful of them all. Shahrū refuses but promises that if she bears a daughter, Mubad can claim her for a bride. After many years she gives birth to the beautiful Vīs, who is brought up by a wet-nurse together with prince Rāmīn, Mubad's younger brother. By the time Vīs is mature enough to get married, Shahrū in forgetfulness breaks her pact with Mubad, wedding her instead to Vīrū, his son and Vīs's brother. The marriage is not consummated, owing to the fact that Vīs is menstruating at the time. Learning of the marriage, Mubad wages a battle with Shahrū's principality, in which Mubad is defeated. Notwithstanding the defeat and Vīs's resistance, Shahrū, tempted by Mubad's exquisite presents and fearing God's punishment for breaking the pledge, relinquishes her daughter to the old king. On their way to Mubad's realm, Rāmīn who accompanies the royal entourage, catches a glance of Vīs's face and falls desperately in love with her.

In the meantime the devoted nurse of Vīs learns of her abduction and goes to Marv, where she advises Vīs to put up with her fate. The latter, loathing the union with Mubad, threatens to kill herself, and the nurse casts a spell on

31 See Melikian-Chirvani, "Roman", p. 9.

32 See ibid., p. 10; de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, p. 80 and n. 1. A Kurdish version of the story exists as well (ibid.).

33 The poem survived in a small number of manuscripts – eight complete copies and some five extracts of different length (see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, pp. 164–65; Tūdūā/Gvākhāriyā (eds.), Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vīs-u Rāmīn*, introduction, pp. 27–28). For editions, see Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vīs-u Rāmīn*, ed. Maḥjūb; Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vīs-u Rāmīn*, ed. Tūdūā/Gvākhāriyā. For translations, see Fakhr ud-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, trans. Morrison (English; prose); Fakhraddin Gorgani, *Vis and Ramin*, trans. Davis (English; verse); Gorgâni, *Le roman de Wîs et Râmîn*, trans. H. Massé, Paris 1959 (French; prose); Fakhriddin Gurgani, *Vis i Ramin: poèma*, trans. S. Lipkin, Moscow 1963 (Russian; verse).

34 Our knowledge of Gurgānī and the circumstances of his work's composition derives from the poem itself. For summary, see Meisami, "Gorgāni".

Mubad that renders him impotent with Vīs. The lovesick Rāmīn confides in the nurse, who after much persuasion and trickery brings him and Vīs together. From now on the lovers seek every opportunity to spend time together and constantly struggle with the obstacles set on the path of their illicit love by Mubad who discovers their secret. Fatigued by incessant suffering and Mubad's hostility, Rāmīn departs from Marv, goes to Gūrāb where he meets moon-like Gul and marries her. Vīs writes a long letter to Rāmīn describing her feelings during their separation. By the time he receives it, Rāmīn has grown weary of Gul and returns to Vīs. The two conspire with the nurse and plan a revolt against Mubad, after which they flee to Daylam with the king's treasury. Mubad follows them but is killed by a wild boar. The lovers return to Marv where they get married and Rāmīn is crowned king. He rules eighty-three years; after Vīs dies, he passes his throne to their elder son and lives until his death as a recluse at Vīs's tomb.[35]

As far as the romance's sources are concerned, Gurgānī offers a somewhat convoluted explanation in one of the initial sections of his poem. While describing his conversation with his patron, the Isfahani governor ʿAmīd Abū al-Fatḥ Muẓaffar, who asks his opinion about the story of Vīs and Rāmīn "which is well liked in this country", Gurgānī concedes to the loveliness of the story. He mentions that it was put together by six wise men in the Pahlavi (Middle Persian) language which was not accessible to everybody at that time. During previous times the story was used for the study of Pahlavi. Moreover, in the past "there were no professional poets", and only now poets know how to impose metre and rhyme on speech. After presenting the advantages of versified discourse over prose, Gurgānī refers, somewhat ironically, to the ancient experts who rendered the story into Persian, but introduced strange words and failed to embellish it with conceits and proverbs. At the request of the governor, he takes it upon himself to adorn the story and "wash" it of meaningless and obsolete words.[36] Gurgānī thus evokes both Middle Persian (Pahlavi) and New Persian sources and implies that the poem is at once a translation of a work in Middle Persian, and a reworking of a translation from Middle Persian to New Persian.[37] Although there is some vagueness as to the immediate source Gurgānī worked from, most scholars agree that it was probably in some-

35 For a more detailed summary, see Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn", 11/4, pp. 745–53; Bürgel, "Liebesvorstellungen", pp. 67–77.

36 Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vīs-u Rāmīn*, ed. Tūdūā/Gvākhāriyā, pp. 28–29. Full translation in Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn", 11/4, pp. 742–43.

37 Davis, "Vis o Rāmin".

what antiquated New Persian;[38] whether it was in verse or in prose remains unclear.[39]

The background of *Vīs-u Rāmīn* as specifically Parthian was well established by Vladimir Minorsky, who discusses the internal evidence of the romance, including the names of its characters, geographical background and political organisation reflected in it, thus demonstrating its probable origins in the Arsacid period (247/38 BC – 224 AD).[40]

The *Vīs-u Rāmīn* is saturated with Zoroastrian motifs and practices, among which the brother-sister marriage (between Vīs and Vīrū) which was considered desirable in pre-Islamic Zoroastrian Iran and the mention of which is generally eschewed in Islamic texts of pre-Islamic origin by Muslim authors; a particular attitude to menstruation and to woman's impurity during this period; the significant role of sacred fires; the motif of trial by fire; Vīs's burial on a *dakhma*, the Tower of Silence, and more.

From the point of view of the development of the love romance, *Vīs-u Rāmīn* represents a milestone in the medieval Persian tradition, greatly surpassing the works of ʿUnṣurī and ʿAyyūqī discussed above: Gurgānī introduces psychological depth by expressing the characters' innermost feelings and thoughts and by conveying the moral complexities of human experience.[41] This is achieved by presenting shifting or contrasting points of view through various rhetorical means, among them interior monologue and dialogue of the characters, interpolated lyric passages of songs sung by the accomplished minstrel Rāmīn, letters, narratorial interjections serving as commentary on the action, and descriptions built on rich imagery.[42] In addition, Gurgānī's *Vīs-u Rāmīn* introduces a discourse on the ideal of kingship, specifically on the relation between violence and injustice as they are embodied first and foremost in the character of Mubad, but also in Rāmīn's infidelity to Vīs,[43] – the themes which would become pivotal in Niẓāmī's love romances.

The diffusion of *Vīs-u Rāmīn* seems to be rather limited. It was popular in the medieval Caucasus, to which its prose translation in the 12th century into Georgian as *Visramiani* bears testimony. The translation is attributed to Sargis

38 Ibid.; Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn", 11/4, p. 744; 25/2, p. 275; Tūdūā/Gvākhāriyā (eds.), Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vīs-u Rāmīn*, introduction, pp. 22–23. For a different view, see e.g., de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, p. 163.

39 On this, see e.g., de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, p. 162.

40 Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn", 11/4; 12/1; 25/2.

41 See Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 137–45. For an examination of the representation of the characters and their relationship, see also Bürgel, "Liebesvorstellungen", pp. 77–90.

42 For an incisive discussion of all mentioned aspects, see Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 90–111.

43 See ibid., pp. 182–92.

T'mogveli and closely follows Gurgānī's poem.[44] The Ottoman poet Lāmiʿī, mentioned above in connection with his rendering of ʿUnṣurī's *Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā* into Ottoman Turkish, compiled a version of *Vīs-u Rāmīn* as well, which although preserving the original metre of Gurgānī's poem and showing a direct dependence on it, considerably reworks it.[45] *Vīs-u Rāmīn*'s impact is most palpable in Niẓāmī's romantic poems, first and foremost in his *Khusrau va Shīrīn* (see below).

Attempts have been made to demonstrate the influence of *Vīs-u Rāmīn* on the Celtic legend of Tristan and Iseult.[46] However, in the absence of a plausible explanation as to how this story could have migrated from medieval Khurāsān to medieval Europe, any comparisons are bound to remain inconclusive.

d) Romantic Poems by Niẓāmī

Ilyās b. Yusūf Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī (d. not later than 1209/10) was a native of Ganja, the capital of Arrān in Transcaucasian Azerbaijan, where he spent the whole of his life.[47] Born to a Kurdish mother, he had a son Muḥammad from his first wife of Qipchaq slave origin. Although no information on his education is available, his works testify to his mastery of the Persian and Arabic language and literature, Islamic theology and jurisprudence, philosophy, ethics, music, astronomy and astrology; he was well acquainted with geographical and cosmographical literature of his time and possessed some knowledge of mathematics, medicine, and botany. Niẓāmī probably started his career as a court poet, but then renounced it, possibly on account of the envy of other court poets.[48] Nevertheless, all his works were commissioned by, or devoted to, certain patrons.

Niẓāmī's poetic output comprises five narrative poems, unified after his death under the title *Khamsa* ("Quintet") or *Panj ganj* ("Five Treasures"): *Makhzan al-asrār* ("The Treasury of Secrets), *Khusrau va Shīrīn* ("Khusrau and

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44 For bibliographical references to editions and translations of the Georgian version, see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, p. 165.

45 See Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn", 12/1, pp. 31–32.

46 For a bibliography on the supposed connections, see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/1, p. 167; also Fakhraddin Gorgani, *Vis and Ramin*, trans. Davis, pp. xxxiii–xlii. For enumeration of common motifs and similarities, see Davis, "Vis o Rāmin"; Fakhr ud-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, trans. Morrison, *passim*. For a rebuttal of the connection, see, e.g., Bürgel, "Liebesvorstellungen", pp. 96–98.

47 Biographical data on the poet varies considerably. I follow Bertel's's reconstruction based mostly on internal evidence extracted from the poet's works. See Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 91–123; also Chelkowski, "Niẓāmī Gandjawī", p. 76.

48 Discussion in Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 114–17.

Shīrīn); *Laylī va Majnūn* ("Laylī and Majnūn"); *Haft paykar* ("The Seven Beauties" or "The Seven Portraits"); *Iskandar-nāma* ("The Book of Alexander").[49] Apart from the narrative poems, Niẓāmī also composed *ghazal*s (lyric pieces), and to a lesser extent, *qaṣīda*s (panegyric odes) and *rubāʿī*s (quatrains); at least one collection (*dīvān*) of his shorter poems was in circulation by 1188.[50] Manuscripts of his lyric collection, rare in themselves, usually comprise around two thousand distichs.[51]

1) *Khusrau va Shīrīn*

The story of the second poem of the *Khamsa*, *Khusrau va Shīrīn* (completed between 1176 and 1186),[52] takes place in a historical setting, to which I refer – where relevant – in a summary of the poem's plot.

Prince Khusrau (the Sasanian Khusrau II Parvīz; r. 590–628), son of Shāh Hurmuz (the Sasanian Hurmizd IV; r. 579–590), hears from the painter Shāpūr about Shīrīn,[53] the beautiful niece of the Queen of Arrān known as Mihīn-Bānū.[54] He falls in love with her. To gain Shīrīn's heart for Khusrau, Shāpūr goes to Armenia where Shīrīn entertains herself during spring-time. Having seen Shāpūr's portraits of Khusrau, Shīrīn becomes so enamoured that she immediately sets off for Madāyin, Khusrau's capital. In the meantime, however,

49 For the complex chronology of Niẓāmī's poems, see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/2, pp. 439–46.

50 See ibid., p. 447.

51 On Niẓāmī's lyric poetry, see Bertel's, "Lirika Nizami".

52 See Niẓāmī, *Khusrau va Shīrīn*, ed. Tharvatiyān. For other editions, see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/2, pp. 483–84. For translations, see Nizâmi, *Le Roman de Chosroès et Chîrîn*, trans. H. Massé, Paris 1970 (French; prose); Nizami, *Chosrou und Schirin*, trans. J.Ch. Bürgel (Manesse Bibliothek der Weltliteratur), Zürich 2009 (German; prose interspersed with verse); Nizami, *Sobranie sochineniy v pyati tomakh*, vol 2: *Khosrov i Shirin*, trans. K. Lipskerov, Moscow 1985 (Russian; verse).

53 Shīrīn is a historical figure mentioned in early Christian sources, Syriac, Byzantine, and Armenian, as well as in early Arabic historiographical works. On the basis of the sources, one may conclude that Shīrīn was a Christian and Khusrau's concubine; it was only after some time that she and Khusrau married (probably in 592), Shīrīn becoming one of his most influential wives. Her ethnic origin is variously given as Greek (Byzantine), Persian, or Armenian. See Aliyev, "Rannie istochniki"; idem, "Legenda"; Orsatti, "Kosrow o Širin".

54 Mihīn-Bānū, whose personal name is Shamīrā (or: Shumayrā), does not appear in earlier versions of *Khusrau va Shīrīn* and is introduced into the story by Niẓāmī (see also below). On the basis of the etymology of Shamīrā's name and the data of early medieval Armenian sources, the suggestion was made that the character retains traces of the legendary narrative about Semiramis, as preserved in Armenian tradition. See Aliyev, "Obraz Mehin-Banu".

Khusrau is slandered before his father, leaves the court and departs for Armenia to find Shīrīn. They chance upon each other on the road but remain unaware of one another's identity. Shīrīn stays in Madāyin under the guise of Khusrau's new concubine, while he spends time in Bardaʿa, Mihīn-Bānū's capital. The lovers' paths finally cross when Khusrau seeks refuge in Bardaʿa from Bahrām Chūbīn who usurped the throne after Hurmuz's death.[55] Notwithstanding the unrest in his kingdom, Khusrau passes his time in light-hearted pleasures with Shīrīn; however, while entreating her to consummate their love, he receives a firm rejection: Shīrīn is ready to become Khusrau's wife only after he has suppressed the uprising and restored to himself his father's throne. Khusrau's wounded pride induces him to take steps: he seeks the help of Qayṣar of Rūm (the Byzantine Emperor Maurice; r. 586–602) who willingly aids him, strengthening their pact by wedding him to his daughter Maryam.[56] Khusrau restores his sway over Iran.

Meanwhile Mihīn-Bānū dies and Shīrīn inherits her throne, but moved by her love for Khusrau, she arrives in Iran, where she lives in seclusion in a mountain castle. This is where the story of Farhād's tragic love for Shīrīn starts, ending in his suicide as a result of the ruse played on him by the jealous Khusrau.[57] Maryam dies but this does not remove the obstacles between the lovers. The complexity of their relationship is masterfully articulated in the long scene of their conversing on the snowy evening, Shīrīn standing on the wall of her castle, while the freezing Khusrau pleads with her to let him in – but to no avail. When at long last they finally marry, Khusrau falls victim to the conspiracy of his son Shīrūya who covets both his father's throne and his stepmother. Khusrau is imprisoned and Shīrīn stays with him in the dungeon, where he is stabbed to death while she is asleep near him. She shuns her stepson's importunity and kills herself on Khusrau's tomb.

55 The Sasanian general Bahrām Chūbīn contested Khusrau II Parvīz's right to the throne and a state of war ensued between the two. Khusrau was forced to seek Byzantine support and in the meantime Bahrām Chūbīn crowned himself king (r. 590–91).

56 No ancient sources mention a daughter of Maurice married to Khusrau, and the figure of Maryam is usually considered as a duplication of Shīrīn lacking historical basis. However, recent research shows that this character might be identified as the Persian Christian martyr Saint Golinduch (d. 591), baptised with the name Maria. She met Khusrau II at Hierapolis, in the company of the Emperor Maurice's emissary, Domitian, bishop of Melitene. A version of her *Life* was translated into Georgian and was probably known in the Caucasus region in the early medieval period. See Brock, "Golinduch"; Orsatti, "Kosrow o Širin".

57 For the Farhād – Shīrīn story and its evolution from the time of Niẓāmī to the 20th century both in Perisan and Turkish, see Duda, *Ferhād und Shīrīn*.

In a section explicating the reasons for his composing the poem, Niẓāmī describes the story of Khusrau and Shīrīn as well known and most pleasing, at the same time remarking on the inadequate treatment of its theme.[58] He admits acquaintance with Firdausī's rendering of the story, mentioning that *ḥakīm* (i.e. Firdausī) disposed of the love topic because of his old age. Niẓāmī does not intend to emulate his predecessor, but to focus on the "game of love".[59] Indeed, Niẓāmī's version differs considerably from that of Firdausī in its scope, plot development and character treatment. Unlike Firdausī, Niẓāmī devotes minimal attention to the historical-political background of the story and represents the character of Shīrīn in a different light (see below).

Another source mentioned by Niẓāmī is a manuscript draft kept in Bardaʿa, whose "clean copies are well disseminated".[60] This might point to the local nature of materials used by Niẓāmī which circulated in medieval Azerbaijan where he lived. Indeed, the story of Farhād and the figure of Mihīn-Bānū with the localisation of her realm in the historical Bardaʿa first appear in Niẓāmī's poem and might originate in local traditions, whether written or oral.[61]

Besides Firdausī, *Khusrau va Shīrīn* was formed in dialogue with yet another literary work, Gurgānī's *Vīs-u Rāmīn*, the account of which was given above. In addition to the structural affinity to Gurgānī's poem which finds expression in Niẓāmī's use of the same metre, Niẓāmī introduces direct references to the characters,[62] models scenes on this earlier work and echoes – both explicitly and implicitly – Gurgānī's work on the levels of poetic device, language and imagery.[63] Moreover, while Niẓāmī's attitude towards the story of Khusrau and Shīrīn by Firdausī is somewhat dismissive, his relation to *Vīs-u Rāmīn* is that of intertextuality that "at once increases the complexity of Niẓāmī's romance and

58 Niẓāmī, *Khusrau va Shīrīn*, ed. Tharvatiyān, p. 137, lines 37–38.

59 Ibid., p. 137, lines 46–50. For Firdausī's version of the story, see Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, vol. 8, pp. 259–319, lines 3387–4107; pp. 364–73, lines 494–615.

60 See Niẓāmī, *Khusrau va Shīrīn*, ed. Tharvatiyān, p. 137, line 39. Vaḥīd Dastgirdī gives a different reading – "whose clean copies are *not known* (*nīst maʿrūf*) in dissemination" (*Khusrau va Shīrīn*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 32, line 10), – which supports the local origins of at least some parts of Niẓāmī's story.

61 See also notes 54, 56 and 60 above.

62 See, for example, the references to Vīs (in the form of Vīsa) in Niẓāmī, *Khusrau va Shīrīn*, ed. Tharvatiyān, p. 350, line 46; p. 368, line 74.

63 The affinity of Niẓāmī's *Khusrau va Shīrīn* with *Vīs-u Rāmīn* has been long noted and studied, mostly along the lines of influence, borrowing and imitation; see, e.g., Maḥjūb (ed.), Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vīs-u Rāmīn*, introduction, pp. 91–95. See, however, the next note.

suggests that he views his poem as a commentary on (or, properly, interpretation of) that of his predecessor".[64]

Comparing Firdausī's treatment of the Khusrau and Shīrīn narrative with that of Niẓāmī's brings to the fore distinctive differences in two domains: (a) between two contrasting traditions – one critical of Shīrīn, with its roots in the Sasanian dynastic chronicles, the other in her favour, with its roots in Armenia and the Christian regions of the Caucasus; (b) between the genres of heroic epic and love romance. Whereas Firdausī touches upon the tale of Khusrau's and Shīrīn's love only cursorily, framing it within the detailed historical narrative of Khusrau's rule and focusing on battles and political issues, Niẓāmī organises his work around their love and its repercussions. *Khusrau va Shīrīn* contains one battle only, that against Bahrām Chūbīn, which is in fact caused by Shīrīn's reminding Khusrau to fulfill his duty to wrest his kingdom from the usurper.[65] By contrast to Firdausī's Shīrīn, who is of humble origin and vindictive in nature and whose jealousy leads her to poison Maryam,[66] Niẓāmī portrays a noble, chaste, albeit passionate, woman who defies Khusrau's initial view of her as an object to be possessed and rejects his divided loyalties in love as in kingship. With Shīrīn's help and as a consequence of his love quest, Khusrau overcomes his willfulness, even if belatedly. For Niẓāmī, as for Gurgānī before him, marriage is the only true union and the ultimate symbol of the success or failure of the lovers' pursuit, whereas a courtly attitude towards love is perceived as incapable of leading to true wisdom.[67]

2) *Laylī va Majnūn*

The poem comprises over 4,000 distichs.[68] It was written in 1188 at the request of the ruler of Shirvān Jalāl al-Daula va al-Dīn Abū al-Muẓaffar Akhsatān

64 Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 111–12. See also Gvakhariya, "Vis o Ramin". For a comparison of the episodes which Niẓāmī adapted or modelled on *Vīs-u Rāmīn*, see Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 113–22, 152–55.

65 For a description of the battle, see Niẓāmī, *Khusrau va Shīrīn*, ed. Tharvatiyān, pp. 255–58.

66 Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, vol. 8, pp. 269–70, lines 3511–15. Firdausī's censorious treatment of Shīrīn in comparison with other female figures who surround Khusrau is dealt with in van Ruymbeke, "Firdausi"; however, see also Davis, "Aesthetics", pp. 118–20, 122. The differences in the representation of Maryam and Shīrīn by Firdausī and Niẓāmī are discussed by Mu'ayyad, "Maryam va Shīrīn".

67 For analysis, see Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 145–58, 192–98.

68 Of all Niẓāmī's poems, *Laylī va Majnūn* raises the most questions as to its textual history; whole chapters have been purged as later interpolations. In various editions the number of chapters and distichs may vary significantly. On the controversy, see Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 270–73; Chelkowski, "Niẓāmī Gandjawī", p. 78. The most recent edition is Niẓāmī-yi

(r. 1187–1196), who himself selected the subject: the story memorialising Majnūn and Laylī.[69] At first, Niẓāmī is reluctant, for although well known, the legend is difficult to poeticise: devoid of any joie de vivre, it is set in barren rocky mountain terrain, and resolutely refuses to introduce pleasing poetic elements, such as descriptions of gardens and royal feasts. However, persuaded by his son Muḥammad,[70] Niẓāmī embarks on the task and completes it in an extremely short period of time, less than four months, according to his own statement.[71]

In the country of the Arabs there lived a chieftain of the tribe of ʿĀmir, who prayed for a son. His prayers were answered and a son, named Qays, was born. By the time he is ten, his beauty is proverbial.[72] Sent to school, Qays falls in love with his classmate Laylī (compare the same motif in ʿAyyūqī's *Varqa va Gulshāh*). The intensity of his love is so great that he is termed "possessed by a *jinn*" (Majnūn). The two are separated for propriety's sake. Majnūn wanders around in frenzy singing love songs and alienating himself from society. The attempt of Majnūn's father to propose his son to Laylī is met with rejection. In order to restore Qays to reason, his father takes him to Kaʿba, but instead of curing his love, the pilgrimage kindles it further. For her part, Laylī pines no less, her anguish intensified by occasionally listening to *ghazal*s composed and sung by Majnūn. In the meantime, noble Naufal tries to help Majnūn win his beloved by waging battle against Laylī's tribe, but without success. Majnūn's estrangement from human kind grows; the only consolation left to him is his friendship with wild animals. In the meantime, weary of Majnūn's eccentricity Laylī's family marries her to Ibn Salām, but the marriage is never consummated

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Ganjavī, *Laylī va Majnūn*, ed. B. Zanjānī, Tehran 1990, which is divided into 67 chapters and comprises 4,538 distichs. I use throughout Niẓāmī, *Laylī va Majnūn*, ed. Tharvatiyān; for other editions, see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/2, p. 485. For principal translations, see *Layla and Majnun by Nizami*, trans. C. Turner, London 1997 (English; prose adaptation); Nizami Ganjavi, *Leila und Madschnun*: *der berühmteste Liebesroman des Morgenlandes*, trans. R. Gelpke, Zürich 1983 (German; prose, abridged); Nizami, *The Story*, trans. Gelpke (English version of German; prose); Nizami, *Leyli i Medzhnun*, trans. R. Aliyev, Baku 1981 (Russian; prose); Nizami Gyanjevi, *Sobranie sochineniy v pyati tomakh*, vol. 3: *Leyli i Medzhnun*, trans. T. Streshneva, Moscow 1985 (Russian; verse); Nizami, *Layli i Madzhnun*, trans. Chalisova/Rusanov (Russian; literal verse by verse translation, with extensive scholarly commentary); Neẓāmī, *Leylā e Majnūn*, trans. G. Calasso, Milan 1985 (Italian; prose).

69 See Niẓāmī, *Laylī va Majnūn*, ed. Tharvatiyān, p. 44, lines 25–26.

70 Ibid., pp. 45–47, lines 35–81.

71 Ibid., p. 47, line 91. On the circumstances of the poem's composition, see Nizami, *Layli i Madzhnun*, trans. Chalisova/Rusanov, pp. 15–18. See also, Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 232–42.

72 Niẓāmī, *Laylī va Majnūn*, ed. Tharvatiyān, p. 77, line 46.

because of Laylī's fidelity to her beloved. After Laylī's marriage and his father's death Majnūn's insanity reaches its pinnacle, assuaged from time to time by an exchange of letters between the lovers and by their secret chaste encounters, during which Majnūn sings his *ghazal*s brimming with dolefulness and sorrow. Affected by Laylī's suffering her husband Ibn Salām gets ill and dies.[73] With the approach of autumn Laylī withers away. Majnūn bemoans her death, sometimes prostrating himself on her grave, sometimes roaming the mountains. He eventually breathes his last breath, while embracing Laylī's grave. His dead body remains there for a month, or according to another version, for a year, guarded by wild beasts. He is finally buried near his beloved's grave, and the two graves turn into a place of pilgrimage for suffering lovers whose pain is cured there (again, compare a similar motif in ʿAyyūqī's *Varqa va Gulshāh*).

Unlike in his other poems, Niẓāmī does not elaborate on the sources of *Laylī va Majnūn*, implying only that he is reworking a celebrated Arabian tale. The roots and development of the Majnūn narrative in the Arabic milieu are fairly well established. Krachkovsiy's study of the sources affirms the historicity of several personages in the narrative.[74] Majnūn is traditionally identified with poet Qays b. al-Mulawwaḥ who died around 700 and is credited with poems on platonic love featuring ʿUdhrī motifs, either of his authorship or attributed to him.[75] These poems, as well as commentaries on them, initially gave rise to fragmentary motifs connected to Majnūn and Laylī (in early 9th century), and later to more or less orderly written anecdotes (during the 10th century), which, however, never developed into a unified whole.[76] As for Persian literature, despite a score of allusions to the two lovers in poetry and prose before Niẓāmī,[77] he appears to be the first author to grant the tale coherent treatment, urbanising the Bedouin legend and investing the female character with a more

73 A chapter on the lovers' union follows (Niẓāmī, *Laylī va Majnūn*, ed. Tharvatiyān, pp. 262–72), which, on account of its incongruity with the spirit of the narrative and later episodes, is deemed a later interpolation (see Bertel's, "Nizami", p. 265, n. 110).

74 Krachkovskiy, "Rannyaya istoriya", pp. 602–03. Also Miquel and Kempf, *Majnūn et Laylâ*. For an opinion in favour of Majnūn as an imaginary character, see Pellat, "Mad̲j̲nūn Laylā. i. In Arabic literature", p. 1102.

75 Krachkovskiy, p. 603; also Chelkowski, "Niẓāmī Gandjawī", p. 78. On ʿUdhrī poetry, see p. 72 above.

76 Krachkovskiy, "Rannyaya istoriya", pp. 622–24, 631. See also Pellat, "Mad̲j̲nūn Laylā. i. In Arabic literature", p. 1103; Seyed-Gohrab, "Leyli o Majnun". The contents of three early Arabic versions are given by Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 242–49.

77 For examples, see Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn*, pp. 69–72; de Bruijn, "Mad̲j̲nūn Laylā. ii. In Persian, Kurdish and Pashto literature", p. 1104.

active role.[78] As mentioned above, some common motifs with ʿAyyūqī's *Varqa va Gulshāh* can be discerned in Niẓāmī's poem; however, it is unclear whether Niẓāmī had a direct acquaintance with ʿAyyūqī's work or borrowed the motifs from the common lore.

Since the problem of interpolations remains unresolved,[79] interpretation of the poem's meanings is necessarily conjectural. Notwithstanding that, different interpretations have been suggested. According to one, Majnūn's passion and self-alienation from society cause him to lose sight of his own self, turning him into a shell that harbours the image of the ideal Laylī which ousts her earthly prototype. Only when freed from the mundane does he metamorphose into a pure and sublime Poet, his delirious passion adding further stimulus to his poetic genius.[80] According to another, opposing interpretation, the story reveals the destructive aspects of love which, once it becomes an obsession, results in division rather than in union. The ultimate object of Majnūn's adoration is not Laylī, but his own self-image as a lover. His self-indulgence and deliberate self-estrangement rooted, among other things, in his moral passivity, destroy his family, both of his parents dying from the grief of separation, compromises the honour of the noble Naufal, who offered him his aid, and ultimately ruins the faithful Laylī.[81] As for Majnūn's poetry, inspired by his abortive passion, it is limited to self-expression and provides "not guidance toward right conduct (the proper function of poetry), but misguidance – it is, in short, a negative exemplum".[82] Yet another strand of interpretation offers a mystical reading of the poem. Manifestations of Majnūn's seemingly ascetic and abstinent way of life (emaciation, vegetarianism, reluctance to speak, rejection of clothing) are considered to reflect the practices of mystics; his death is couched in mystical terms as "death from the hands of the Beloved", while his actions and behaviour are seen as meaningful to his desire to release himself from worldly bonds in a mystical quest for unity with the Beloved, impersonated by Laylī.[83] Although mystical poets did refer to Majnūn and Laylī in a mystical context prior to Niẓāmī's time, in view of the poet's lack of historical connection with Sufi circles and incongruities in the representation

78 For changes in Arabic material and innovations which seem to be introduced by Niẓāmī, see Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 267–69; Seyed-Gohrab, "Leyli o Majnun".

79 See above, notes 68 and 73.

80 Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 269, 273.

81 Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 158–63. On passivity as Majnūn's main characteristic, see also Anvar, "Pearls", pp. 56–57.

82 Meisami, *Poetry*, p. 165; see also ibid., pp. 166–71.

83 See, e.g., Nizami, *Story*, trans. Gelpke, pp. 219–20; Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn*, pp. 89–159, 213–69; Anvar, "Pearls".

of the pair's relationship with the Sufi ideal of self-annihilation in the Beloved, a Sufi interpretation of the poem should be treated with caution.[84]

3) *Haft paykar*

Haft paykar is the last of Niẓāmī's romantic poems and probably the most accomplished from the viewpoint of its contents, structure and style. Compiled in 1197 and dedicated to the ruler of Marāgha ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn b. Āq-Sunqur (d. 1208),[85] the poem amounts to slightly more than 4,500 distichs.[86] Similarly to *Khusrau va Shīrīn*, *Haft paykar* revolves around the historical figure of a Sasanian king, Bahrām V Gūr (r. 421–39; his sobriquet Gūr meaning "onager" which was his favourite prey), although the historical context is much less significant.[87] Structurally, the poem is organised into two distinct but interrelated parts: a frame-story that comprises the narrative account of Bahrām's life, and seven long tales which are woven into it and comprise the bulk of the poem.[88]

On account of the unrest in Iran, the heir-apparent Bahrām is brought up at the court of the Arab king Nuʿmān whose realm is placed in Yemen. Bahrām obtains a superb education: he masters three languages – Arabic, Persian and Greek, – learns sciences, including astrology and astronomy, and becomes an unsurpassed hunter. After his father's death, Bahrām ascends the throne after having overcome the enmity of the Iranian nobility. He proves himself a wise and just ruler, rescuing his people from famine. Next comes the famous episode of Bahrām's conflict with his favourite slave-girl Fitna, which is ultimately peacefully resolved (see below, p. 85). The king sets out in search of the Princesses of the Seven Climes whose portraits he saw in a mysterious room in

84 See Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 110–11, 270; Meisami, *Poetry*, p. 172.

85 See discussion in de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/2, p. 441 and n. 2 there.

86 For editions and their evaluation, see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/2, p. 486; ibid., "Haft Paykar", p. 523; his list should be completed by Niẓāmī, *Haft paykar*, ed. Tharvatiyān, which I use here. The principal complete translations include Nizāmī, *The Haft Paikar*, trans. C.E. Wilson; reprint of 1924 ed. in one volume (English, erotic passages are translated in Latin; blank verse; with useful commentary); Nizami, *The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance*, trans. J.S. Meisami, Oxford 1995 (English; verse); Nizami, *Sobranie sochineniy v pyati tomakh*, vol. 4: *Sem' krasavits*, trans. V. Derzhavin, Moscow 1985 (Russian; verse); Nezāmī di Ganjè, *Le sette principesse*, trans. with introduction A. Bausani, notes by A. Bausani/G. Calasso, Milan 2002 [Or. publ. Bari 1967]. For a list of partial translations, see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, 5/2, p. 487.

87 For a comparison of the Bahrām Gūr story in Arabic and Persian historical, literary and popular sources, including *Haft paykar*, see Pantke, *Arabische Bahrām-Roman*.

88 The complex structure of the narrative, including the spacial and time patterns as a key to the poem's meaning is minutely dealt with in Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 203–36.

his castle when he was a youth in Yemen. Each princess comes from a different part of the world (i.e., clime) – India, Turkistān, Khvārizm (= Chorezm), Saqlāb (identifiable with medieval Russia), Maghrib, Rūm (Byzantium), and Persia. An architect erects seven domed pavilions, one for each of the princesses, every pavilion painted in a colour associated with the clime and planet of its occupant.[89] Bahrām visits one princess each day, feasts and listens to a tale she relates. The tales are elaborate and of sensual nature, comprising fantastic or riddle-like elements.[90] While Bahrām is thus engaged with the princesses, his vizier seizes power and the kingdom falls into disarray. Once Bahrām becomes aware of the injustices inflicted on the people of his kingdom, he executes the vizier, restores justice and orders the seven pleasure-domes to be converted into fire-temples for the worship of God. During his last hunt, Bahrām mysteriously disappears in a cave while hunting an onager – *gūr*. His body is never recovered.

As with *Khusrau va Shīrīn*, Niẓāmī selected the story which had earlier been dealt with by Firdausī, rewriting it, adding new material and changing emphases.[91] One of the most conspicuous examples of his creative rewriting concerns the episode of the conflict between the king and his harp-girl Fitna (Firdausī's Āzāda).[92] Whereas in Firdausī's condensed version Bahrām appears as a willful and tyrannical ruler whose camel tramples Āzāda underfoot for her unfortunate remark which seemingly hurt his pride, Niẓāmī offers an elaborate story which pre-empts Fitna's role in Bahrām's spiritual guidance and ends with their marriage. Aside from Firdausī, Niẓāmī must have used the Mirrors for Princes as a source, including the *Siyāsat-nāma* ("Book of Governance") of the

89 For a discussion of colour and number symbolism, see Krotkoff, "Colour"; for examining the role of astrology, see Vesel, "Réminiscences"; Ritter, *Bildersprache*, pp. 27, 50.

90 The imagery, symbolism and purport of the tales in terms of Bahrām's spiritual progress from the darkness of moral ignorance (symbolised by the black of the first dome) to the light of illumination (symbolised by the white of the last, seventh dome) are examined in Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 225–32.

91 For the story of Bahrām Gūr in the *Shāh-nāma*, see Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, vol. 6, pp. 363–615; content summary in Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 315–19. Regarding his treatment of the version of his predecessor, Niẓāmī declares, "that which was left by him half-said I say; the half-pierced pearl I thread; While that which I found right and true just as before I've left to view"; see Niẓāmī, *Haft paykar*, ed. Tharvatiyān, p. 90, lines 24–25; translation and analysis in Meisami, *Poetry*, pp. 201–02.

92 See respectively, Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq and Umīdsālār, vol. 6, pp. 373–76, lines 166–98; Niẓāmī, *Haft Paykar*, ed. Tharvatiyān, pp. 167–78.

Saljūq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092). Other sources, notably those of the inserted tales, have yet to be studied.[93]

4) Reception of Niẓāmī's Romantic Poems

Niẓāmī's oeuvre had a considerable impact on the development of different linguistic and ethnic literary traditions. "Niẓāmī's poetic school" comprises hundreds of compositions in a variety of languages, from Persian, Arabic and a range of Turkic languages to Urdu, Kurdish, Punjabi, Pashto and others; a substantial part of the compositions remains unedited and unstudied, some works known only by title.[94] Whereas modern European scholarship employs the term "imitation" or "creative imitation" to describe Niẓāmī-inspired poems, the Persian normative tradition offers a subtler view of the relationship between the source and its progeny. The most common pattern of the relationship is defined as *naẓīra* ("similar, parallel"), when both formal (e.g., metre), compositional and some thematic features of the model are retained, but at the same time new material is introduced and the topic and characters are treated in an original fashion, providing different responses to themes and reflections addressed in Niẓāmī's poetry. Such are, for example, *Shīrīn-u Khusrau*, *Majnūn-u Laylī* and *Hasht bihisht* ("Eight Gardens of Paradise"; note the changes in the titles of all three poems) by the Indian poet Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī (d. 1325), who was the first to emulate Niẓāmī's *Khamsa*; and the works *Laylī va Majnūn*, *Farhād-u Shīrīn* and *Sabʿa-yi sayyāra* ("Seven Planets") by ʿAlī Shīr Navāʾī (d. 1501), who wrote in the Chaghatay (Eastern Turkic) language.[95] Another type of relationship, *tatabbuʿ* ("following behind, succeeding"), involves the keeping of formal elements (e.g., metre, number of chapters), but altering the thematic nature of the work. As an example, one can mention the *Haft akhtar* ("Seven Stars") of Fānī-yi Kashmīrī (d. 1670–71), written as a *tatabbuʿ* of *Haft paykar*, that substitutes Bahrām Gūr with a trickster Hilāl and relates seven independent stories that take place during his travels.[96] Finally, the *javāb*

93 An attempt was made to trace certain motifs to the Jewish *Book of Esther* and to the Greek *Liber Syntipae*; see Piemontese, "Turandot". Besides written sources, it is highly plausible that Niẓāmī utilised motifs and tales current in oral tradition; see, e.g., Umīdsālār, "Haft paykar-i Niẓāmī".

94 For an annotated listing, see Aliyev, *Temy;* Rādfar, *Kitābshināsī*, pp. 216–34. Quantitatively, the most frequently emulated of Niẓāmī's poems is *Laylī va Majnūn*, followed by *Khusrau va Shīrīn*, *Haft paykar* being the least; see Aliyev, *Temy*, p. 20.

95 For a discussion of the contents of the poems and their relation to Niẓāmī's work, see Aliyev, *Temy*, pp. 45–58; Bertel's, "Nizami", pp. 275–81; Orsatti, "Kosrow o Širin", and Aliyev, *Temy*, pp. 156–61; Bertel's, "Navoyi", pp. 139–65 respectively.

96 See Aliyev, *Temy*, pp. 219–22.

("reply") type of relationship suggests the treatment of an entirely different subject along the lines determined by the model (mostly, the same metre) and implies debate across time with the model. Such is *Nal-u Daman* of Fayḍī (d. 1595) which, written as a reply to Niẓāmī's *Laylī va Majnūn*, reworks one of the episodes of the *Mahabharata*.[97] Thus, as a result of the poetic writing inspired by Niẓāmī's romantic poems, we witness over the centuries a process of accumulation, whereby texts and their authors are involved in a complex intertextual relationship not only with their ultimate model, but also with their more immediate predecessors.

Starting from the 14th century onwards two significant, albeit opposing, tendencies in the reception of Niẓāmī's romantic poems can be traced. One concerns the interpretation of his poems, particularly *Laylī va Majnūn* and *Haft paykar*, in a mystical Sufi vein, which spawned a host of compositions illustrating various mystical concepts, among them, for example, works by Jāmī (d. 1492) and Vaḥshī-yi Bāfqī (d. 1583). The other tendency involves a shift towards the fabulous and the adventurous, borrowing from folklore and thus bordering on popular literature.[98]

Niẓāmī's romantic poems inspired original reworkings in Georgian by King Teymuraz I (d. 1663) who composed *Layl-Mejnuniani*, and by Nodar Tsitsishvili (d. *ca*. 1658) who wrote *Baram-Guriani* (= the story of Bahrām Gūr), adopting themes and motifs from *Haft paykar*.[99] Although less popular than Niẓāmī's other poems from the viewpoint of emulation in the Perso-Turkish milieu, the themes and motifs of *Haft paykar* resurface in rather unexpected cultural environments. Thus, the Red Dome novella, which is told to Bahrām by the Russian princess re-emerges after many transformations as the story of Turandot, a tragi-comedy versified by Carlo Gozzi.[100] In addition, some of the poem's most

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97 See ibid., pp. 216–17.

98 The latter tendency manifests itself mostly after the 16th century and typically relates to poets writing in India (see, e.g., *Haft jauhar* of Abjadī, in Persian; Aliyev, *Temy*, pp. 29–31; *Bahrām-u Bānū Ḥusn* by Amīn, in Urdu; ibid, p. 44; *Bahram and Gulandam* by Tab'ī, in Dakhni; ibid., p. 204).

99 See respectively, Aliyev, *Temy*, pp. 206–07 and 262–64.

100 The connection with Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar* was noted long ago; see, e.g., Meier, "Turandot in Persien", which refers to a number of parallel stories. The channels via which the tale infiltrated the European realm remain obscure; hypotheses include the Persian collection of tales, which was translated into French as *Les Mille et un Jour* by Pétis de la Croix (see ibid., p. 1; Piemontese, "Turandot", pp. 133–34), and the Italian story-collection *Peregrinaggio di tre giovani figliuoli del re di Serendippo* (published in Venice in 1557) by a certain Christoforo Armeno (i.e. the Armenian) who translated the tales from Persian to Italian (see Chilkūfskī, "Upirā-yi Tūrāndūt"), pp. 719–21. A probable offshoot of Niẓāmī's tale is a

conspicuous motifs can be discerned in the Byzantine romance *Velthandros and Chrysantza* (*ca.* 13th century),[101] which fact calls for a closer investigation of a possible cultural impact of 11th–13th-centuries Persian literature on Byzantine and Early Modern Greek romances.

Conclusion

In the course of the three hundred years covered by the present survey, the genre of Persian love romances underwent a significant evolution, maturing by the late 13th century into a fully-fledged tradition, with its own structural, thematic and ideological dimensions. Departing from the conventions of the heroic epic, it adopted a variety of poetic metres, versatile enough to express romantic topics; the emphasis shifted from action to a depiction of the protagonists' interior world through elaborate imagery and character delineation. In addition, love romances demonstrate diversity in the types of love they portray, from the chaste and pure to the illicit to the matrimonial relationship. Yet, the common denominator in most of the Persian love romances discussed above is their tragic ambiance, on the one hand, and their didactic purport, on the other hand, which both set them apart from their Ancient Greek and Byzantine peers. With Gurgānī and even more so with Niẓāmī, the love romance becomes tightly linked with concepts of justice and kingship, the lovers' relationship emblematic of just or tyrannic rule and reflecting the transformation of the male protagonist – usually a king – as he proceeds along the path to self-knowledge.

From the viewpoint of their sources, medieval Persian love romances draw on three major cultural traditions: pre-Islamic Iranian, formed both under the Parthians (*Vīs-u Rāmīn*) and the Sasanians (*Khusrau va Shīrīn*, *Haft paykar*), Arabic (*Varqa va Gulshāh*, *Laylī va Majnūn*), and Greek (*Vāmiq-u ʿAdhrā*). Although written sources can be postulated for most of the texts considered above, the influence of the oral tradition must have been significant and might account for the local lore encountered, for instance, in Niẓāmī's *Khusrau va Shīrīn* and *Haft paykar*.

At the same time, the above categorisation of the cultural traditions and sources undermines the complexity of cultural exchange at work in the Iranian

vernacular Greek rewriting of the early 15th-century *Alexander and Semiramis* based on an Ottoman *Vorlage*; see Moennig, *Erzählung*, esp. pp. 19–36.

101 For a comparative analysis, see Yiavis, "Persian Chronicles", esp. pp. 34–38; on Velthandros, see the chapter on Original romances by C. Cupane in this volume pp. 110–14.

domain during the pre-Islamic and early medieval periods. A good illustration of such complexity is offered by the relationships between Greek and Persian materials as reflected in Greek Hellenistic novels and Persian love romances: this relationship is better described as of mutual reciprocity than direct influence. Notwithstanding the origins of *Vīs-u Rāmīn* and *Varqa va Gulshāh* in Parthian and Arabic sources respectively, these two romances demonstrate significant motif correspondences with Greek novels written between ca. 100 BCE and ca. 300 CE, i.e., during the domination of the Parthian Empire (247/38 BCE – 224 CE) where the Greek element for a long time formed an important part of the Parthian culture.[102] Common motifs and narrative techniques comprise, among others, the abduction of a bride around the time of her wedding ceremony; the forced separation of lovers during which the heroine protects her chastity by every means possible; the importance of chance in the development of plot; the chronotope of "adventure-time", etc.[103] These similarities by no means imply lost Greek prototypes either for *Vīs-u Rāmīn* or *Varqa va Gulshāh*, but rather suggest that "their basic motivic building blocks were originally elaborated within the same hybrid milieu that gave rise to the Greek novels, and that the sharing of motifs and narrative technique by the two sets of tales is in all probability a result of their having sprung initially from this common, culturally highly mixed, soil".[104] The same may prove true with respect to the impact of the Persian love romances, notably those of Niẓāmī, on the neighbouring non-Persianate cultures, such as the Byzantine literary tradition, for example. Any inquiry into cultural contacts should take into account possible channels of transmission and patterns of diffusion and reception of the literary material, be it on the level of motif, theme or a text in its entirety. The main prerequisite for such an inquiry remains, as always, an old-school philological-historical scrutiny predicated on a close comparative reading of the original texts.

102 On Greek influence during the Parthian period, see Martinez-Sève, "Hellenism", p. 161.

103 For a comparison of these and other common motifs in the Persian romance and Greek love novel, see Davis, *Panthea's Children*, pp. 44–57, 61–75; ibid., "Greek and Persian Romances", pp. 339–40.

104 Davis, *Panthea's Children*, pp. 43–44.

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CHAPTER 4

In the Realm of Eros: The Late Byzantine Vernacular Romance – Original Texts

Carolina Cupane

1 Cultural and Social Context

Sometime in the first decades of the 14th century, the poet Manuel Philes (c. 1270 – after 1332) composed an epigram in honor of Andronikos Komnenos Palaiologos, a cousin of the ruling emperor, Andronikos II.[1] At the end, the imperial lineage and name of the noble prince are mentioned; his military virtues and other merits are also praised effusively:

> Andronikos, noble scion of the Komnenoi, replete with every virtue, a hero in battle, a born orator, breathing fire in his written work, in his command of argumentation, in the travails of war, in the most difficult political and judicial matters, amply abounding in virtues beyond all other men.[2]

The man extolled here is also known as a courageous general (στρατηγός) in other sources; in addition, as an author he left behind an as-yet-unedited work entitled *Dialogue with a Jew,*[3] as well as around two hundred iambic verses concerning virtues and vices, a very popular topic in Byzantine literature.[4] As impressive as these may be, the aforementioned achievements are not Philes's prime concern. In this case, Andronikos is not praised for his accomplishments

1 Manuel Philes, *Epigram*, ed. Martini, published in Knös, "Qui est l'auteur du roman", pp. 280–84. The date of composition probably falls between 1310 and 1340: see Pichard, *Callimaque*, p. XXVIII.

2 *Epigram*, 152–67, ed. Martini (= Knös, "Qui est l'auteur du roman", p. 284).

3 The Greek text of the dialogue remains unedited; a Latin translation may be read in *Patrologia graeca* CXXXIII, 795–924. On the content, see Külzer, *Disputationes graecae*, pp. 195–99.

4 Edition of the iambic verses with extensive biographical notes on the author: M. Ozbic, "I Κεφάλαια di Andronico Paleologo", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 91 (1998), 406–22 (text, pp. 413–22).

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as an orator or as a general, but as the author of an erotic book (βιβλίον ἐρωτικόν), i.e., a romance.

In the contexts of Byzantine literature, localizing erotic fiction within the milieu of the imperial court is nothing new; romances in the 12th century were certainly composed for a courtly circle of recipients and were perhaps sponsored by this very audience.[5] However, compared to the romances of the Komnenian period, the plot of the work (even in the rough synopsis offered by Philes) seems innovative.

Three princes are sent by their father on a journey to prove themselves. The bravest will succeed him on the throne. The youngest of the three turns out to be the most capable: he conquers enemy cities, subdues a wild lion, climbs a lofty mountain, breaks into a splendid castle ruled by a dragon, and frees a princess imprisoned there, with whom he experiences the erotic joys of consummated love. After a period of happiness, the young woman is abducted by a foreign king, while the hero is incapacitated by a magical apple devised by a witch. After he regains consciousness, he sets out on a search for his beloved, locates the adversary's palace, dons mourning attire, and thus disguised enters the garden. He identifies himself to the girl by means of a golden ring, which he conceals in a rosebush. The lovers are now reunited and nothing will mar their bliss.

With his castles, dragons, and magical objects, the author conjures up a truly unconventional,[6] even strange, fictional world – a world that breaks radically with the kind of settings depicted in the late antique novel. The antique decor which was still retained in subsequent 12th-century Byzantine romances – such as temples, altars, public assemblies, and processions in honor of the Olympian gods – and the geographically recognizable Mediterranean background, marked by the sea and its dangers, give way to an uncertain world of wonder and sensuality, dominated by the supernatural.

Philes tries, however, to thwart the strangeness of the scenery by subjecting it to a systematic allegorical deconstruction. So the sovereign father is God, who sets numerous tests before his children so that they may prove themselves worthy of the kingdom of heaven. The dragon is Satan, the obstacles are his traps, the beautiful princess is the soul, whose beauty captivates the man. But, when he fails to be in control of his passions, his soul is kidnapped by a tyrant. In order to free the soul from the tyrant's clutches, the man must don peniten-

5 On the Komnenian romances and their social background, see the contributions by Ingela Nilsson and Panagiotis Roilos in this volume.

6 On this see Cupane, "Other Worlds", pp. 194–95.

tial garments. By God's grace, symbolized by the golden ring, he finally succeeds in uniting with the soul again and enters into the Father's kingdom.

This kind of interpretation, which coaxes a hidden moral meaning out of a tale that appears indecent, was already in use in antiquity; it was applied systematically in Byzantium to rehabilitate questionable topics, for example, those concerning pagan mythology. In this way, a number of classical works, in particular the Homeric epics, were made acceptable for a Christian audience.[7] But even erotic literature was "purified" in this manner: for example, the *Aethiopica*, a romance written by Heliodorus of Emesa (3rd-4th centuries AD), which was widely read throughout the Byzantine era.[8] Like the anonymous princess in the erotic work of Andronikos Palaiologos, Heliodorus's heroine, the beautiful Charikleia, is an allegory of the human soul.[9] The allegorical interpretation attempted by Manuel Philes, however, is unable to neutralize the potential for innovation within this new narrative style. On the contrary, such a traditional interpretation highlights the strangeness of the content all the more starkly and also sheds new light on the otherwise classically influenced cultural milieu of the Palaiologan era.[10]

Philes unfortunately reveals nothing about the linguistic register and form (prose vs. meter) of the work he describes. This comes as no surprise: after all, the allegorical method of interpretation excludes any engagement with formal and stylistic features. It seems likely, however, that Andronikos Palaiologos opted to use the vernacular, a language form very close to every-day speech, but not identical with it.

Literary use of the vernacular was nothing new, of course. Works that experiment with the literary potential of this type of language – which was *per se* exclusively for oral communication – can already be found in the 12th century, but such writings were still rare at that time and did not use a low literary register throughout the entire work.[11] What was still the exception in the 12th century became the rule in the Palaiologan period with regard to the broad field of fictional narrative, which established itself at first at the end of the 13th

7 On the tradition of allegorical exegesis in Byzantium, see Cesaretti, *Allegoristi bizantini*.

8 On Heliodorus's novel, see the contribution by Massimo Fusillo in this volume; on Heliodor's popularity in Byzantium, see Agapitos, "Narrative, Rhetoric and Drama rediscovered".

9 On this topic, see Gärtner, "Charikleia in Byzanz". Concerning the disputed authorship and dating of the allegorical exegesis, see Acconcia Longo, "La questione ", counterargument in Bianchi, *Il codice del romanzo*, pp. 7–67.

10 See below, n. 15.

11 On this development see Cupane, "Volkssprache und Volksliteratur" (forthcoming).

century at the court of the first Palaiologan emperor in reconquered Constantinople and later encompassed wider circles.[12]

A noteworthy feature of vernacular language and literature is permeability as well as openness towards material of foreign origin.[13] As a matter of fact, the anonymous authors of romances seemed unafraid of contact with foreign material and incorporated motifs from wherever they sensed something entertaining or captivating – from the East but especially from the West. This new literary freedom even allowed them to borrow ready-made content. As a result, some of the most popular reading material in the Western Middle Ages found their way in creative adaptation to Byzantium.[14] Although it cannot be proven, it is nevertheless possible that a stronger orientation to the West was associated with a decentralization of literary activity, and so these adaptations therefore may have originated far away from Constantinople in areas controlled by the Franks.[15]

2 Other Stories, Other Settings

If the indisputable receptiveness to foreign material is the most remarkable phenomenon of the vernacular fiction of the Palaiologan era, the level of creativity is no less impressive: the traditional erotic/adventure narrative structure after the Hellenistic and late antique style was combined with new backgrounds and motifs in an unconventional way, a fact which entailed a complete reshaping of the narrative structure. Three romances in particular can be seen as partaking of both tradition and innovation. These works, despite stylistic autonomy, share a common set of motifs as well as a striking fondness for the descriptive mode and a similar composition of narrative space; they may therefore be considered as a group.

Livistros and Rodamne, Velthandros and Chrysantza, and *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* probably were written in close chronological proximity, although

12 See Beck, "Der Leserkreis".

13 On this point, see Beck, *Byzantinisches Erotikon*, pp. 171–73. – But the scholarly community in Constantinople did not itself remain uninfluenced by the influx of foreign texts, as translations from the Latin by Manuel Holobolos and Maximos Planoudes prove; on this topic, see for example Fisher, "Planoudes, Holobolos", and ead., "Manuel Holobolos, Alfred of Sareshal".

14 On these adaptations, see the contribution by K. Yiavis in this volume.

15 See Moennig, *Die Erzählung von Alexander und Semiramis*, pp. 41–45; Jeffreys, "Place of composition" and "Byzantine Romances".

the relative chronology can only be reconstructed implicitly.[16] The titles of all three works reveal their proximity to the ancient narrative tradition. It is not merely by chance that the choice of names closely follows that of romances from the Komnenian period: Rodanthe, for example, is the name of the heroine in Theodore Prodromos; Chrysochroe and Kratandros are the names of the lovers in the subplot of the same work; the romance written by Niketas Eugenianos includes Kleandros, Kalligone, and Chrysilla in various roles. These names, in turn, walk in the footsteps of the late antique novel.[17] However, the *fabula* on which all three works were based differs substantially from the traditional plot of the late antique novels. This traditional plot, as already suggested, was set in a vaguely defined classical antiquity and was retained by the novel writers of the 12th century. Instead of the countless wanderings of a pair of young lovers separated by bitter fate, threatened and enslaved by pirates and other enemies, scattered across the entire Mediterranean region and only at the end reunited again, the three romances treated here initially place the male hero alone at the center of the action. The adventure segment is substantially reduced: in the opinions of the anonymous authors, the only adventure worth telling is the experience of love. In the late antique novel the moment of falling in love certainly played an important role. It was placed structurally at the beginning of the plot: Love fell upon the protagonists like a blow, pulled them into its spell, forced them to leave their homeland, and set the adventure in motion, all to grant them (in the inevitable happy ending) sexual fulfillment within the safe haven of marriage. In our three romances, however, the hero finds love only after a series of adventures; he has to first seek out the chosen woman and prove himself worthy of her. Love here has been transformed into an art that has to be learned and requires a kind of initiation. Only after the hero, inexperienced in passion, has changed his heart, can the actual love story start and develop through the canonical stages of violent separation and reunion culminating in the likewise canonical happy ending.[18] In keeping with this new attitude toward love, the figure of Eros accordingly grows beyond itself, so to speak. In place of the winged, capricious Putto of the Alexandrian tradition is now a powerful imperial figure, governing all creation and exercis-

16 Contrary to the previously stated opinions, I accept in this case the sequence *Livistros–Velthandros–Kallimachos*, suggested by Agapitos, "Η χρονολογική ἀκολουθία", even though I consider the backdating of the first romance to the mid-13th century unsupported by evidence.

17 Some observations on the similarity of the names can be found in Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 151. 153

18 On the macrostructure of the original vernacular romances, see Cupane, "Il motivo del castello", pp. 236–41; on the microstructure, see Agapitos, *Narrative structure*.

ing judicial functions.[19] As a fitting context for the imperial appearance of the God of love, the anonymous romance authors created an innovative setting, which indeed maintains the features of the *locus amoenus* (pleasant place) of the classical tradition, but which expands the garden into an impressive royal palace consisting of several buildings. Poised between dream and reality, the realm of Eros in the vernacular romance appears initially on the narrative scene in colorful descriptions (*ekphraseis*), which in length and detail outshine what romance literature previously had to offer.[20] Gleaming in the splendor of gold, marble, and jewels, this new narrative place takes iconographical inspiration from the model of the fabled imperial palace at Constantinople – a palace that still remained the iconic image associated with imperial power in late Byzantium.[21] It is also a reference to the otherworldly realm, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is described in numerous saints' lives from the Middle Byzantine period and with which it shares a number of common traits.[22] But the similarities go far beyond iconographic resemblances. Just as Paradise and Hell in the religious sphere, the realm of Eros is an imaginary world of the marvelous parallel to the real one, a profane paradise where a separate chronotope[23] outside of reality prevails: here, time stands still and the laws of physics are suspended. As God Almighty in the kingdom of heaven judges the behavior of human beings, punishes sinners, and rewards the righteous, so does Eros in the role of both emperor and judge: he condemns those who break his erotic law and forces them to love against their will.[24] This is not, in my opinion, a parody of the Christian afterworld. When the anonymous authors endow Eros with attributes and functions associated with the Christian God and allow him in

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19 In the 12th century, Eumathios Makrembolites (*Hysmine and Hysminias* II 7–9; III 1, ed. M. Marcovich, *Eustathius Macrembolites De Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus libri XI*, Munich/Leipzig 2000. pp. 17–19 and 23–24) had already depicted Eros as an enthroned emperor surrounded by allegorical figures and conferred upon him judicial authority over the lives of the protagonists, see Cupane, "Ἔρως βασιλεύς" and "Metamorphosen des Eros"; for a different view cf. Magdalino, "Eros the King", as well as Christophoratou, "Figuring Eros"

20 Cupane, "Künstliche Paradiese", pp. 228–45.

21 Cupane, "Traumpaläste", pp. 427–34; cf. Jouanno, *L'ekphrasis,* pp. 131–33 and 199–209.

22 See Cupane, "The heavenly city"; see also, from a different perspective, Moennig, "Literary Genres", pp. 166–73 as well as his chapter in this volume, pp. [17–18].

23 The Russian literary historian Mikhail Bakhtin coined the term "chronotope" for the underlying structure of time and space in a given narrative. He traced the development of the chronotope from the Hellenistic novel through the Renaissance: see Bakhtin, *Dialogic imagination*, pp. 84–258; on the chronotope of the marvelous in medieval chivalric romance in particular, see now Störmer-Caysa, *Grundstrukturen*, especially pp. 196–236.

24 Cupane, "Other Worlds", pp. 190–94.

his kingdom to carry out rituals and ceremonies that in reality took place in the Byzantine court, while in addition describing the rituals with the terminology associated with official imperial rhetoric,[25] they claim for themselves the same literary liberties that a century earlier had inspired their colleagues in medieval France to create a new myth about Cupid's kingship and his heavenly kingdom; they designed this kingdom as analogous to the Christian paradise and described it with language associated with mysticism and feudalism.[26] Depictions of royalty with its attributes were always common in Byzantium; the omnipotence of Eros in turn was a dignified *topos* of love poetry. The move to merge the two was thus a natural one, but it was only accomplished when historical developments forced Byzantium and its literature to come into contact with foreign literary inventions. In the context of cultural transfer, the feudal Seigneur Amour from French poetry was transformed into the Byzantine emperor – a development that testifies to the ability of court literature in late Byzantium to engage in creative assimilation.

3 The Texts in Detail: Structure and Motifs

Livistros und Rodamne

The love story of Livistros, king of the (fictional) Latin kingdom Livandros, and the princess Rodamne (likewise of Latin origin) is the only one of the original romances extant in three different versions, all of which are transmitted in 15th and 16th-century manuscripts. There is a high probability that the original version dates from the last quarter of the 13th century and may have originated at the court – possibly during the reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282–1328) or during the final years of the reign of his father, Michael VIII (1259–1282).[27] Such reworkings are evidence of the dissemination of the text in the post-Byzantine period. I will discuss later in this chapter their prominence in the literature of the 14th century.

25 On this topic see Agapitos, "The «Court of Amorous Dominion»", pp. 394–403.

26 On the literary construction of the *paradisus amoris* in Romance literature of the late 12th century, see Ruhe, *Le dieu d'amours*; cf. Jauss, "Allegorese".

27 However, Agapitos dates the romance to mid-13th century and localizes it within the cultural milieu of the exiled emperor at Nicaea (1204–1261), specifically at the court of Johannes Vatatzes (1222–1254). See Agapitos, "Χρονολογικὴ ἀκολουθία", pp. 101–17, Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου, pp. 51–53, and "Rituals", pp. 409–15. On the different versions, see Agapitos, Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου, pp. 211–27.

In terms of narrative technique, the anonymous author – who was undoubtedly well acquainted with the earlier narrative literature of the 12th century as well as with late antique novels – achieved a remarkable accomplishment. As Achilles Tatius and Eumathios Makrembolites, he chose to use the first person, but he had the story narrated by a minor character and constructed a narrative framework in which the very act of narrating is staged dramatically. In a prologue[28] set before the actual story, Klitovos stands before the assembled court of Queen Myrtane of Litavia (supposedly in Armenia, but in reality a fictional country); it is later revealed that the queen was once his lover. In this context, Klitovos recounts the love story of Livistros and Rodamne – a story he witnessed personally. The plot begins abruptly in a forest *in medias res* with the chance meeting of the protagonist (Livistros) and the narrator (Klitovos), who had been forced to flee his homeland because of his love for a married lady (Myrtane herself). From this point on, the burden of narration falls mainly to Livistros, who describes to his new friend the stages of his love affair in the past with Princess Rodamne. Only after the end of this long flashback, which transports the audience to a time up to six years in the past, does the main narrator take over leadership again, in order to describe from now on the adventure he experienced together with his friend in a linear narrative style up until the conclusive happy ending and his own return to his homeland, where the frame narrative is resumed and concluded.[29] Since direct speeches by third parties are included in both accounts, the end result is a nesting of different narrative levels, which are enmeshed in the style known as "Chinese box structure."[30] This sophisticated narrative structure is artfully constructed and maintained with marvelous consistency until the very end.

The story is divided into four units, which are called "narratives" (*logoi*) or "recitations" (*akoúsmata*),[31] in reference to the mode of reception envisaged in the story.[32] The long account given by Livistros comprises the first two books, within which four distinct sections can be discerned. The common

28 Concerning the composition and function of prologues and epilogues in these texts as well as in vernacular narrative literature in general, see the contribution by C. Cupane in this volume pp. 479–94.

29 A schematic depiction of the sequence of narrative segments can be found in Beaton, *Medieval Greek romance*, pp. 129–33.

30 Agapitos comments on an impressive example of this technique in *Narrative Structure*, pp. 119–28.

31 On this topic, see Agapitos, Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου, pp. 110–30 and "Genre", pp. 32–35.

32 On the mode of reception of the romance and on the degree of reality of the performative situation in particular, see the contribution by C. Cupane and P. Roilos in this volume, pp. 479–94 and 463–78 respectively; cf. also Cupane "Leggere e/o ascoltare"; Agapitos slightly disagrees in his "Writing".

denominator among all of them is the withdrawal of the narrative mode in favor of a descriptive and lyrical mode of expression. The *ekphrasis* of *Erotokratia* (the kingdom of Eros), along with its buildings and the allegorical figures populating the kingdom, occupies the first section. Description and narrative here merge into each other. The space is gradually described from the perspective of the hero walking through it; the author does not strive for a comprehensive account and illuminates only some parts of the complex relevant to the plot.[33] *Erotokratia* is a mental place that the hero visits in a vision the night after he had killed a turtledove during a hunting excursion and thereby caused the suicide of her mate.[34] A relative present during the incident had interpreted it as an example of the irresistible power of erotic attraction throughout the whole of creation and supported his words with a series of examples.[35] This event triggered anxiety, which manifests itself in the subsequent dream.

During a walk in the verdant countryside, Livistros is captured by armed Erotes, tied up, and brought to the palace of Emperor Eros. He has to appear before the court of the god of love and be judged, because he has scorned the universal laws of love. Flanked by *Pothos* (Longing) and *Agape* (Love), who act as legal representatives, Livistros enters the courtroom and there beholds the emperor, who is seated upon a splendid throne and surrounded by *Dikaiosyne* (Justice) and *Aletheia* (Truth). He somehow possesses the facial features of an infant, a grown man, and an old man all at once. Livistros throws himself to the ground before the throne in a gesture of *proskynesis* (reverence), pleads guilty, appeals to his own inexperience and rustic nature,[36] promises improvement, and receives clemency along with the command to go immediately in search of his destined beloved, the princess Rodamne. The oath of allegiance to the insignia of the emperor concludes the young king's transformation into a loyal subject of Eros, whose art (*erototechne*) he will learn from now on. In a second vision immediately following the oath, Eros – this time appearing in the familiar form of a winged cherub – formally gives Rodamne to the young king,

33 Jouanno, *L'ekphrasis*, pp. 105–10; Agapitos, *Narrative Structure*, pp. 177–204; 282–333; Cupane, "Künstliche Paradiese", pp. 232–34.

34 A pair of turtledoves was an ancient symbol of marital love and fidelity, see *Der Neue Pauly* 12/1, pp. 45–47.

35 In erotic literature, the recurring examples for the omnipotence of Eros are those of irresistible attraction, such as iron and the magnet, male and female palms, asps and morays, and the river Alphaios and the spring Arethousa; references concerning these examples may be found in Cupane, "Ἔρως βασιλεύς", p. 257, note 41.

36 See below, p. 105, note 43.

but then quickly disappears with the girl and leaves behind Livistros, who is both smitten and sorrowful.[37]

The allegorical court of Eros sparks mixed feelings of wonder and uneasiness in its involuntary visitor – and undoubtedly in the courtly recipients of the romance, too. This ambivalence is indicated by the use of many words incorporating the stem *xenos-* (strange, foreign).[38] And rightly so, because this place of wonders, though dressed up in Byzantine robes, is indeed strange. Its true home is located, as already suggested, within erotic allegorical poetry, which originated in northern France during the 13th century. Such poetry invariably included a journey undertaken by the hero-narrator into the realm of Eros or another allegorical figure (*Natura, Virtus,* or most notably, *Fortuna*), where a judicial proceeding took place, to the detriment of the visiting hero; the entire journey was likewise embedded within the context of a dream. The anonymous author of *Livistros* borrowed, along with the setting, the closely related ritualization of falling in love as well as the notion of Eros's kingdom as a feudal world, in which the virtues of love appear as acting individuals. He then "translated" these concepts into the formal language of Byzantine imperial power.[39] Undoubtedly, the representation of Eros as emperor in Eumathios Makrembolites was also an important source for the author of the *Livistros* romance, as he demonstrably – although not explicitly – imitated style and iconography found in Makrembolites's work.[40] But the *Livistros* author did not only transpose the highbrow language of his model into a lower register: he also substantially rewrote the source, significantly strengthened the character of Eros, made structural inversions, and – most notably – inserted different "alien speeches".[41] Thus he created a complex, original work that seems in its otherness to embody the tensions and contradictions of his time in a paradigmatic way. This work, as one will see, even became a model for subsequent imitation.

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37 On the dream sequence, see Agapitos, "Dreams" and (with a different focus) Cupane, "Sogni", pp. 108–14.

38 The skillful, richly varied use of vocabulary associated with wonder marks the entry into the realm of the marvelous, see Cupane, "Other Worlds", partic. pp. 194–95; for another interpretation, see Agapitos, "Genre", pp. 39–42.

39 Cupane, "Concezione", pp. 292–97; Agapitos, "Rituals", pp. 393–404.

40 Examples in Cupane, "Jenseits des Schattens", pp. 99–100.

41 The term "alien speech" was coined by Mihail Bakhtin, who analysed the intrinsic polyphony of romance as a genre, in which the voices of diverse subgenres are always echoing: see Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 285–305.

The realm of Eros is not the only marvelous place Livistros is permitted to enter. After two years of tedious wanderings, to which the author devotes only a few verses, the young king and his entourage of a hundred men reach *Argyrokastron* (silver castle), in which his never-before-seen beloved resides. With an improbable triangular layout alluding to the three faces of the god of love, this castle likewise possesses symbolic meaning, as the statues positioned on the three walls reveal: respectively the twelve months, twelve Christian virtues, and twelve profane virtues.[42] To a certain extent, the allegorical construction depicts a *summa* of the tenets of love as represented in this romance. Before Livistros can embrace his beloved, he must become aware of this *ars amandi* carved in stone and thereby learn the proper behavior of a lover. Love – this is the message the statues convey – is subject to time; it must be outfitted with Christian virtues, but it may not dispense with secular characteristics (such as decorum, respect, a good reputation, patience). It is hardly surprising in light of this that Livistros, as stated earlier, had described his condition before his conversion to love as that of a country bumpkin.[43] Mastering the art of love is thus implicitly declared to be a necessary component of human perfection; it is not only socially relevant, but also the true expression of an aristocratic disposition.[44]

This descriptive section, lacking in action, blends seamlessly into an equally static segment, in which the hero assumes the lyrical stance of a troubadour; by harnessing the power of the written word, the hero prepares to capture the heart of the unapproachable woman behind the castle walls. Although Eros aptly supports Livistros by shooting his fiery arrow into Rodamne's heart (v. 1424) (Figure 4.1), he must write dozens of letters (*pittakia, grafai*) and songs (*tragoudia*), all of which he casts upon his beloved's balcony by means of an arrow, before he finally receives an answer and a lively correspondence can subsequently arise between the lovers.

Through these winged messages the author recounts the development of their courtship, from the first, harsh rejection from the proud and haughty girl, to her eventual yielding to the suitor's advances, and finally to the tentative

42 The descriptions of the months and the Christian virtues have a parallel, separate manuscript transmission, on which see Agapitos, Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου, pp. 207–11; on the widespread representation of the twelve months in literature, see Jeffreys, "The Labours"; on the virtues, see Cupane, "Epigramm", pp. 24–28.

43 χωρικός: *Livistros and Rodamne, Redaction α*, ed. Agapitos, v. 514, p. 275; cf. Cupane, "Concezione", p. 294, note 72; Agapitos, "Rituals", p. 397.

44 See Cupane, "Στήλη τῆς ἀστειότητος", pp. 206–08.

FIGURE 4.1 *Codex Lugdunensis Scaligeranus 55 (early 16th century), University Library Leiden:* Libistros and Rodamne, *f. 62ʳ: Eros shoots at Rodamne with an arrow.*
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, LEIDEN.

confession of love. Gifts are exchanged – among them, rings hold a particular significance because they are symbols of conjugal love. Conflicts and reconciliation, sorrow and ecstasy, Klitovos – and the audience along with him – undergoes all the phases of a developing love story through the letters that the hero recites to him from memory during the journey. The significance of the correspondence of the heroes for the anonymous author is shown by the fact that he has a second series of letters recited by the couple during the return journey, just before the happy ending, so that the love story seems to be framed.[45] Moreover, with respect to literary history, the letter exchange between Livistros and Rodamne is of special interest because it presents a unique example of authentic Byzantine love poetry. Through these small lyrical poems an erotically charged atmosphere is created, thus compensating for the lack of the sexual element in the romance. The anonymous author undoubtedly borrowed themes and motifs from oral folk songs that were to be written down only much later; however, the artful literary texture of the poems along with several motifs testify to the anonymous author's rhetorical skill, as is manifest in the following poem:

> A tender **branch of desire** germinated in my hearth and a **tree of woe** took root, what a calamity! **Desires's bush** and **woe's tree** are flowering, the latter has **fruit** but the former has **leaves**. From the **tree of woe** I harvest **fruits of bitterness** and from the tender **branch of desire** (I pick) **leaves of sweet** love. **Desire sweetens** a **little**, **woe poisons more**, **desire is small** and **woe** is **great**.[46]

The artful interplay of antitheses, assonance, and semantic parallels along with a relatively simple vocabulary, focusing upon a single image – a tree springing up in the heart of a lover – reveals the contours of a vernacular eloquence, which has yet to be thoroughly investigated. The motif itself, however, does appear in learned poetry of the 12th century. Theodore Prodromos devoted a series of epigrams to a ring equipped with a seal, upon

45 On the love letters, see Agapitos, "Ἀφηγηματικὴ σημασία" and Cupane, "Uno, nessuno", pp. 452–64.

46 *Livistros and Rodamne, Redaction α*, 4087–94, ed. Agapitos, p. 414: "**Κλωνάριν πόθου** εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἐφύτρωσεν καρδίαν / καὶ πόνου ἐρίζωσεν **δενδρόν**, ἔδε παραδικία· / ἀνθεῖ τοῦ **πόθου τὸ κλαδὶν** καὶ **τὸ δενδρὸν τοῦ πόνου**, / ἐκεῖνο πόνου ὑπωρικὰ καὶ τούτου **πόθου φύλλα**. / Τρυγῶ ἐκ τοῦ **πόνου τὸ δενδρὸν ὑπωρικὰ πικρίας** / καί ἀπὸ τοῦ **πόθου τὸ κλαδὶν φύλλα γλυκέας ἀγάπης**·/ **γλυκαίνει ὁ πόθος ὀλιγὸν**, **πικραίνει ὁ πόθος πλέον**, / καὶ ἔναι ὁ **πόθος λιγοστὸς** καὶ **πλεονάζει ὁ πόνος**; English translation in Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, p. 176.

which could be seen "two lovers, and from their breasts two trees springing and joining in a crown".[47]

Lyric insertions in narrative texts are hardly extant in Byzantine narrative literature – the romance written by Niketas Eugenianos in a high linguistic register is the only one to use this technique to some extent. However, the technique is widely used in vernacular French romances of the 13th and 14th century, and was employed even earlier in Persian and Arabic literature.[48] It's impossible to determine which tradition influenced the *Livistros* author, but the continuity of the phenomenon over time and space is impressive evidence of the highly developed cultural mobility of the Middle Ages.

The courtship of the hero is crowned with success. Although she had already been promised to the Egyptian king Verderichos, Rodamne is able to set a stipulation: that only a tournament can determine who she chooses as her future husband, because, as she explains, "The Latin people love those who are brave, and in particular those who fight for love and adventure".[49] As expected, Livistros emerges as the winner of the duel and is proclaimed immediately co-emperor by the magnates of the kingdom, who raise him up on a shield in accordance with ancient Byzantine tradition.[50] This double narrative sequence is significant in two respects. First, in terms of narrative technique, it functions as a hinge between the preceding descriptive and lyrical section, which has an extremely slow pace, and the next section, which is dominated by the narrative mode and characterized by a rapid narrative rhythm and frequent scene changes. Secondly, the double narrative sequence paradigmatically embodies the complexity of the literary cosmos of the *Livistros*, whose author is indeed well informed in Byzantine ceremonial practice, but at the same time also aware of Western chivalric romances, where he could find those valorous men fighting for love and adventure who certainly did not exist in reality.[51]

47 See Theodore Prodromos, *Neglected Poems*, Nr. 156, ed. N. Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos, The Neglected Poems and Epigrams. Edition, Translation and Commentary*, ed. N. Zangklas. Diss. Vienna 2014 (forthcoming). On the motif of the tree of love, see Cupane, "Jenseits des Schattens", pp. 97–99.

48 On the lyrical interludes in French texts, see Boulton, *The Song in the Story*; on the relevant works in Persian literature, see the chapter on Persian Love Romances by J. Rubanovich in this volume, pp. 67–94; on Niketas Eugenianos, see Cupane, "Uno, nessuno", pp. 459–61.

49 *Livistros and Rodamne, Redaction α*, 2392–93, ed. Agapitos, p. 349.

50 Historical examples in Agapitos, "Rituals of the Empire", pp. 409–16; however, the here suggested connection to the coronation ceremony of Theodore II Laskaris in 1254, seems untenable to me.

51 On this, see Cupane, "Concezione", p. 305, note 130. For an authentic (albeit idealized) biography, see Duby, *Guillaume le Maréchal*.

Another thread in the complex web of voices in the *Livistros* romance is revealed in the second section, which gives an account (in chronological order) of the lovers' separation, Livistros' and Klitovos' search for the kidnapped Rodamne and finally the reunited couple's joyful return to Silver Castle. The author transformed these conventional motifs through his own creativity: instead of staging pirates and natural disasters – traditional elements of the genre – he set the couple's separation as well as their reunion within a magical context. The character of the old sorceress, who rules over demons and with their help suspends the laws of nature, who enchants and transforms objects, people, and animals, is a new phenomenon in Byzantine narrative literature. She is a traditional element in folklore as well as in oriental literature. The author of the *Livistros* romance is probably relying on both traditions. The transfer of magic into the demonic realm belongs rather to the realm of folklore, whereas the idea of a magical horse, which can cover vast distances in mere minutes, seems to be directly or indirectly influenced by fairy tales that found their way into the massive collection of the *Thousand and One Nights*; these were then received into Romance narrative literature via Spain, but they were probably also well known in Byzantium in some form.[52] The devil horses transport Rodamne (as well as Livistros and Klitovos, who are searching for her) to Egypt and then back home again in no time at all. Supernatural power in the form of Eros's erotic paradise and his rituals emulating imperial power had initially brought the lovers together; they are then separated and later reunited by black magic, since the same magical procedure that had been used to kidnap Rodamne brings about her liberation in the end.

After the heroine is freed, the romance returns to a familiar narrative track and heads for the inevitable happy ending. In this case, the happy ending is twofold, for Klitovos will marry one of Rodamne's sisters and remains in Silvercastle. The story could have ended at this point, but the scrupulous author does not neglect to close the frame-story he had sketched in the prologue: as a widower, Klitovos returns home, back to his first love. As the audience already knows, this is the very Myrtane who acted as the story's primary addressee; the story itself can thus be understood as a gift of love for her. This is a satisfying closure for a love tale, indeed, a quite traditional one! And yet this is only true on the surface, for the audience is simultaneously kept in suspense by the promise of a sequel. *Livistros* is, in a way, an open-ended work: after having told the story of his friend, the narrator Klitovos now seeks an author for his personal love story, which in his opinion failed to be properly

52 See the analysis of the flying horse's motif in Cupane, "Itinerari magici"; on the dissemination of this motif in Romance literature, see Houdebert, "Histoire du cheval".

appreciated. This writer should have certain characteristics: most importantly, he must possess a sympathetic and compassionate heart and the necessary inclination to write love stories, but otherwise he is permitted to abridge and edit the material as he pleases.[53]

The originality of the *Livistros* romance, whose hybrid status results from frequent change in register and the inclusion of various "alien speeches", is accompanied by a sophisticated use of a wide range of rhetorical devices. In this, the anonymous author is no way inferior to contemporary learned authors, such as Maximus Planoudes or Theodore Metochites, although he writes in a different linguistic register. All these elements together establish the otherness of a literary creation, which is truly "composed strangely" (ξενοχάραγος), as the anonymous author himself calls it in the prologue. This work embodies in an ideal way the – largely unofficial – cultural exchange between Byzantium, the Orient and the Occident that took place during that time, and is reflected in the domain of fictional writing.

Velthandros and Chrysantza

Transmitted in a single 16th-century manuscript, the love story of the Byzantine (*rhomaios*) prince Velthandros and Princess Chrysantza of Antioch with its roughly 1300 verses is much leaner and simpler than the *Livistros* romance. Despite the considerable differences in volume and narrative technique, it should nevertheless be understood as a creative rewriting of the *Livistros* romance. The chronological relationship between the two texts has not been definitely clarified, but there are some indications that the likewise anonymous author of the *Velthandros* romance borrowed plot elements from the *Livistros* romance and modified them to accommodate different literary tastes. In the prologue the narrator pretends to be a minstrel and appeals to a young audience, whom he tries to entice with the promise of an exciting adventure story – the very reason he begins by providing a brief summary of the content.[54] The story itself runs as follows: Velthandros, the second-born son of the Byzantine emperor Rodophilos leaves his homeland with only a small retinue, because he is not loved or respected by his father and can no longer tolerate the state of affairs. The emperor's attempt to recall his son by force fails: Velthandros kills without difficulty ten men from the delegation that tried to

53 *Livistros und Rodamne, Redaction α*, 4590–601, ed. Agapitos, p. 432.

54 *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, 5, ed. Cupane, p. 228: ὑπόθεσιν τῆς τόλμης καὶ ἀνδρείας. The prologue is interpreted differently by Agapitos, "Fiction and Fictionality", pp. 310–13 and Cupane, "Boschi narrative", pp. 78–82; on the meaning of the address as a mode of reception, see also the contribution of C. Cupane in this volume, pp. 483–85.

bring him home, routs the remainder, and journeys further abroad. On the way through the canyons of Central Anatolia he is attacked by brigands (*apelatai*), whom he also dispatches with ease,[55] and continues on his way until he comes across a mysterious stream in the vicinity of Tarsus; a flame blazes among the waters of the stream and flows along with the current without being extinguished. After a ten-day journey in search of the source of the marvelous river, Velthandros comes to an enormous castle glittering with gold and precious stones. As an inscription carved upon the gatepost declares, this is *Erotokastron* (Castle of Love), a place which those inexperienced in love are forbidden to enter. The young prince is not deterred by this prohibition and breaks into the castle by himself, leaving his attendants behind. He makes his way across the charming park and enters the emperor's palace, which is opulently decorated with statues and friezes. Before his astonished eyes, a kind of secular afterlife unfolds upon the walls, which are decorated with reliefs (or paintings) showing the punishments and the rewards that await those who rebel against Love and those who are Love's faithful servants, respectively. From the inscriptions accompanying each figure, Velthandros learns that the decoration on the wall was created for him in particular. It gives an account of his recent past and announces his future romance with Chrysantza, the daughter of the ruler of Antioch, whom Eros himself had chosen for him as a wife. With a marked break – darkness suddenly falls – the author switches from a purely descriptive mode to a narrative one. A winged servant leads Velthandros to the courtroom of the emperor, where he gives an account of his life and deeds. He is then asked to choose the most beautiful woman out of a group of forty damsels. The young prince carefully carries out this task: the physical virtues and flaws of the individual candidates are painstakingly and mercilessly enumerated in a scene characterized by rapid narrative rhythm and remarkable satirical talent. The woman whom he ultimately selects is Princess Chrysantza, a fact which is revealed in a later episode. Velthandros immediately takes off in search of her.

When one reads this first section from the *Velthandros* romance against the backdrop of the *Livistros* romance, the method of reworking – which is primarily based upon semantic inversions – is immediately apparent. For example, the motif of the judgment at the court of Emperor Eros has been transferred from the elevated sphere of allegory into the narrative model of chivalric adventure. The castle is therefore a real, menacing building; the speaking allegorical figures have been removed from the plot and transformed to artwork

55 The episode refers intentionally to the heroic atmosphere of the epic *Digenis Akritis* (see the contribution by C. Jouanno in this volume), in which the protagonist fights with success against the brigands who stalk his wife.

adorning the castle walls. However, the hero himself receives the most radical reinterpretation, as in this case he is the judge rather than the defendant. The grand, awe-inspiring atmosphere of Eros's kingdom with its didactic moral claim is replaced by a realistic scene imbued with misogynist flavour, in which historical and literary allusions are creatively combined.[56]

The unusually concrete narrative setting of the *Velthandros* romance is in keeping with the realistic tone of the work. The localization of the protagonist's journey across Inner Anatolia, through the Cilician Gates to Tarsus and then to Antioch (which is depicted as Frankish territory) corresponds to geographical reality and roughly reflects the historical situation in the 12th and 13th centuries. The narrative sequence itself may contain allusions to the adventurous wandering undertaken in this region during the 1150s and 1160s by the future Emperor Andronikos I Komnenos.[57]

The realistic colouring, at any rate, extends into the second part of the story. Velthandros reaches Antioch, is admitted into the king's retinue after swearing fealty as a vassal, and recognizes his daughter, Chrysantza, as the woman he had selected. They fall in love but must conceal their mutual affection because they do not share the same social status. Two years elapse before an advantageous opportunity presents itself and Velthandros manages to slip unnoticed into the private garden of his beloved, where he is finally able to embrace her and lie with her. But after this night of passion, a palace guard catches him leaving the garden. He is arrested and thrown into prison. Chrysantza saves his life through a clever lie: she claims that Velthandros secretly entered the garden not because he loved *her*, but because he was in love with her maid, Phaidrokatza. The marriage between the two purported lovers is immediately arranged. But it is merely a sham marriage, even though on the day after the ceremony, the shirt stained with the blood from the *prima nox* (which in reality belongs to Chrysantza) is publicly displayed as proof of the bride's virginity. Using the false marriage as a cover, Velthandros and Chrysantza revel in their love for ten months until Velthandros decides to escape the dangerous situation and return to the Byzantine empire. During the trip on a moonless, stormy

56 The scene is reminiscent of a custom mentioned in hagiographical and historical sources from the Middle Byzantine period. This custom was reportedly used to choose an imperial bride in the 8th–9th centuries; on its contested historicity, see Treadgold, "Historicity of Imperial Bride-Shows"; M. Vinson, "Romance and Reality". The bride show also appears as a literary motif in Western chivalric romances of the late 12th and 13th century, see Cupane, "Concorso di bellezza".

57 On the historical setting, see Agapitos, "Fiction and Fictionality", pp. 287–88, along with the remarks by Cupane, "Una passeggiata", pp. 73–76; for the parallels to Andronikos Komnenos, see Gaul, "Andronikos Komnenos", pp. 630–42.

night, the little group is forced to cross a river. Unlike the marvelous, propitious river in the first part of the story, this river does not have a flame flowing among its waters. In a radical reversal of the narrative function, the river that had initially brought the protagonists together is now the cause of their separation: in its rapid current, the hero's three attendants and the trusty maid Phaidrokatza lose their lives; Velthandros and Chrysantza lose sight of each other and each believes the other to be dead.

The arduous, dangerous journey back, the storm, the subsequent (short-term) separation of the two lovers, the unexpected rescue, and finally the return home, where the lovers marry at last and are reintegrated into their proper social status: all of these are familiar, time-honored *topoi* in romance narratives. The author reels off these *topoi* at rapid pace, but he does not forget to add realistic details. For example, upon returning home, the couple is received at the port by the emperor and his royal household, according to Byzantine custom; the bride is ceremoniously escorted by a delegation of noble ladies; the wedding is celebrated by the patriarch; wedding rings and crowns are exchanged. The author, in his desire to keep things realistic, consequently eliminates from the plot dynamic those magical elements that in the prototype had been the cause of the lovers' separation and reunion. In this case, the lovers flee of their own initiative, without any immediate threat; there is no opponent armed with magic powers – rather, the sheer force of nature causes them to be separated. Despite these differences, the author did indeed draw upon some individual motifs from *Livistros*, but he used them with different symbolism. For example, in *Velthandros* too, a pair of turtledoves symbolizing conjugal love are present (vv. 1118–22), but unlike the pair in the prototype, their function is consolation, not admonition. The birds become separated during the storm and individually comfort the protagonists (who had been likewise torn apart from each other) with their company.[58]

If the anonymous *Velthandros* author, unlike that of the *Livistros* romance, did not draw directly from the reservoir of literary motifs from the West, he was probably aware of narrative literature from Persia. One example is the motif of the castle that is closely related to the hero and contains portraits of the protagonists, thus symbolizing and anticipating their love story. This motif is first used in the well-known novel *The Seven Beauties* (*Haft Paykar*), written in 1197

58 *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, 118–22, ed. Cupane, p. 292, cf. *Livistros and Rodamne*, *Redaction α*, 138–46, ed. Agapitos, p. 262: as seen earlier, one turtledove in this passage dies and her mate flings himself to death out of grief.

by the Persian court poet Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī (1141–1209) from which the author of *Velthandros* probably borrowed it.[59]

By means of the brisk narrative rhythm, the heroic atmosphere, the realistic setting, and a familiar Byzantine flair, the author succeeds in fulfilling the promise he made in the prologue. His "exciting adventure story" was certainly able to satisfy the expectations of his audience. This audience may have been socially similar to that of the *Livistros* romance, but did not share the same literary preferences, focusing, instead, more on "action" than on sophisticated poetic metaphors and/or allegorical allusions.

Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe

Just like the *Velthandros* romance, the story of Prince Kallimachos and his beloved Chrysorrhoe survives in a single 16th-century manuscript that also includes a version of the *Livistros* romance. Early on, scholars noticed the striking similarity of the plot of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* to that of the "erotic book" attributed by Manuel Philes to Andronikos Palaiologos in the epigram quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The opening sequence, with an unnamed king of an unnamed kingdom, who sends his three sons out into the world on a quest in order to prove themselves worthy of succession by their bravery, is identical. Another shared element is the special role of the younger son, who is ultimately victorious. In both cases the hero makes his way into a fortified city (*kastron*) radiant with gold, which is protected by enemy guards: in the romance these are frightening snakes (ὄφεις φοβεροί); in the epigram, they are simply enemy guards (δυσμενεῖς φύλακες) without further explanation. In both cases the hero frees a princess held captive in the fortress of a monster (δράκων), kills the monster, and falls in love with the princess, who reciprocates. However, a malicious old witch bewitches a golden apple and uses it to knock him unconscious. He is believed to be dead, while the girl is kidnapped by an adversary. But in both cases the death is false, since the apple has the ability both to kill and to restore life. So the prince sets out to search for the kidnappers, reaches the castle where she resides, enters the castle gardens dressed as a gardener, identifies himself to her by hiding a ring in a rose bush, and finally wins her back. Small differences in details[60] do not detract from the fundamental similarity of the plot nor do they necessarily contradict the authorship of Andronikos; they may just as well be ascribed to the constraints of allegorical interpretation. At any rate, the advice given in the epigram to the

59 For a comparative analysis see Yiavis, "Persian Chronicles", esp. pp. 34–38; on the poetry of Niẓāmī, see the chapter by J. Rubanovich in this volume, pp. 76–86.

60 More differences are enumerated by Knös, "Qui est l'auteur", pp. 288–89.

intended reader, if he is not ready to trudge through the allegorical interpretation ("rather lay upon your bed and snore, so that you don't regrettably soil the book when you flip through it for lewd amusement")[61] is remarkably fitting for the sensuality found in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* – a sensuality distinctive to Byzantine sensibilities.

Whether or not *Kallimachos* should be identified with Andronikos' "erotic book" or not, the very fact that Andronikos is supposed to have written a romance is an important indicator for the social acceptance of this kind of literature. Equally significant is the insertion of fairytale motifs into the traditional love story that are used in almost the same way in the *Kallimachos* romance. This is a remarkable innovation that should compel one to reconsider preconceived judgments about Byzantine writers' lack of creativity. From the very beginning, fairytale motifs help structure *Kallimachos'* plot and determine shifts in meaning when narrative motifs are borrowed from other sources. A marvelous castle is thus here too a significant narrative space. As Livistros and Velthandros before him, Kallimachos meets the love of his life in this place. The castle itself, however, has lost any allegorical connotation, and no longer provides the framework for initiation into the religion of love. Instead, it is a deserted, haunted castle, the dwelling place of a monster (*Drakontokastron*), which is transformed into a golden castle (*Chrysokastron*) once the dragon is dead. Invisible hands serve up food and drink after the hero enters into this "otherworld" – a world that seems at first glance to have originated in a (Modern) Greek folktale, but can already be found in French literature of the late 12th century.[62]

Fairytale elements do indeed shape the atmosphere of *Kallimachos* to a much greater extent than *Livistros*, and they also impart the romance its own distinctive tone, without making it a naive literary product, let alone a folk tale, as it has at times have been called. Although the narrative sequence largely conforms to this genre,[63] such a classification would not do justice to a work that, on the contrary, draws its generic coherence from its sophisticated rhetorical stylization. Just one example of the author's linguistic skill and sensual intensity should suffice here. After entering the dragon's castle, the hero travels

61 Manuel Philes, *Epigramm*, 27–28, ed. Knös, p. 281. On this passage see Odorico, "μοναχικὸς ἀναγνώστης", pp. 282–84, Agapitos, "Writing", p. 158 (whose translation, however, does not accurately render the original's deliberately ambiguous formulation.

62 The opening sequences of the anonymous Old French romance *Partonopeu de Blois* is virtually identical with this part of *Kallimachos und Chrrysorrhoe*, see also Cupane, "Partonopeu's Journey" (forthcoming).

63 See the recent publication by Castillo Ramirez, "El *Calímaco y Crisórroe*".

through the marvelous yet deserted rooms until he comes to a small chamber. Here he glimpses an unexpected spectacle:

> There in the middle – oh, how painful to say this! –
> all alone **a girl was hanging by her hair**
> – I'm losing my mind, my heart's failing! –
> **by her hair** – oh, fate's senseless scheme! –
> **a girl was hanging by her hair** – I'll be quiet now,
> yes, I'll be quiet, I write this only with a broken heart –
> in that place **a beautiful girl was hanging by her hair.**[64]

The erotically charged image of the naked girl hanging by her beautiful hair is evoked before the inner eye of the audience[65] in a memorable and intense way through the use of a few continually repeated words in rising and falling sequence (*anaphora*); these words are intertwined with likewise increasingly emotional exclamations. The authorial comments at the beginning and the end respectively point to the complementary modes of reception (i.e., listening and reading) through the use of vocabulary relating to speaking and writing.

After the girl is rescued from the monster's clutches, the author uses a vivid palette of vocabulary and undisguised eroticism to portray the protagonists' extended sex scene in the castle bath. He takes obvious pleasure in dwelling at length upon the naked body of the girl, whose wounds are kissed away by her lover and whose beauty is further enhanced by the warm, scented water. Unlike in novels from the 12th century, sexuality in this wondrous world is free from all inhibitions. What in *Livistros* was merely implied with lyrical words and in *Velthandros* was sketched only in broad brushstrokes is here portrayed openly and with obvious relish.[66] Eros, the king, is indeed still in the picture as a

64 *Kallimachos und Chrysorrhoe,* 449–55, ed. Cupane, p. 86: Ἐν μέσῳ γὰρ – ἀλλὰ πολὺν ὁ λόγος πόνον ἔχει –/**ἐκ τῶν τριχῶν ἐκρέματο κόρη μεμωνομένη**/– σαλεύει μου τὴν αἴσθησιν, σαλεύει μου τὰς φρένας –/**ἐκ τῶν τριχῶν** – αἴ φρόνημαν παράλογον τῆς τύχης – /**ἐκ τῶν τριχῶν ἐκρέματο κόρη** – σιγῶ τῷ λόγῳ, /ἰδοὺ σιγῶ, μετὰ νεκρὰς καρδίας τοῦτο γράφω/ – **ἐκ τῶν τριχῶν ἐκρέματο κόρη μὲ τῶν χαρίτων.**

65 An analysis of the rhetorical organization in this passage is in Agapitos/Smith, *The Study*, p. 78; for possible echoes to the Ovidian depiction of the naked Andromeda (*Metamorph.* IV 866–890) via the Greek translation of Maximos Planoudes, see Cupane, "Partonopeus' journey".

66 On the depiction of sexuality and its metamorphosis in Byzantine romance in general, see Garland, "Be amorous", pp. 111–16 (on *Kallimachos* in particular); cf. Beck, *Byzantinisches Erotikon*, pp. 183–84 along with observations by Cupane, "Ansichten", pp. 228–29.

witness and guarantor of the heroes' declarations of love, but he no longer functions as a supreme authority. This erotically charged portrayal of the bath as a place of love and ecstasy also contains an underlying allusion to late antique and Hellenistic epigrams, which had just appeared in a new edition by Maximus Planoudes during (or shortly before) the time when the *Kallimachos* romance was being written.[67]

But after the ecstasy of love comes the pain of separation. The author fashioned these scenes (which are obligatory in this genre) on the basis of the *Livistros* romance, but he simplified them significantly. Here too, there is an old witch, whose services are engaged by a rival, but the plot is much more linear and the complex staging (which included horses enchanted by demons, camels and a magic ring, as well as the rival's disguise as an oriental merchant) is completely omitted. The sorceress in the *Kallimachos* romance acts alone and doesn't require outside help; she fashions a golden apple and enchants it: the one who holds the apple in his lap will fall into a state of apparent death, but if the apple is put to his nose, he will be brought back to life again. Linguistic echoes clearly show the close affinity of these two scenes.[68] After being revived, the hero goes in search of his beloved, enters the realm of the kidnapper, is hired as an assistant to the gardener and thus finds a way to get near Chrysorrhoe. As a counterpart to the sex scene in the bath in the first section, the author sets a corresponding erotic scene here, in which the reunited heroes make love in a pavilion specially built near the pond; this pavilion serves as a secret love nest for their nightly rendezvous, a scene the author portrays with obvious enjoyment and attention to detail.[69] As in *Velthandros*, the royal palace in *Kallimachos* is not presented in its architectural entirety, as this is not relevant to the plot. However, courtly way of life is displayed in both works. The depiction of courtly life and rituals mirrors Byzantine reality, despite the fact that the respective sovereigns are foreigners (the first is a Frankish lord, the second a barbarian king). Whereas in the first palace there are women's quarters as well as a palace guard and a notary (who issues a written marriage contract in compliance with the law), one finds here an array of officials bearing Byzantine titles, all led by the head of the imperial household (*domestikos, epi tes trapezes*). Even the eunuchs are there, envious and shrewd in accordance with traditional stereotypes of these characters. As expected, they

67 On echoes of epigrammatic poetry in this passage, see Agapitos, "Erotic Bath"; on the architecture and decoration of the bath, see Cupane, "Orte der Liebe", pp. 171–75.

68 See Cupane, "Itinerari magici", pp. 68–69 and note 38.

69 On the nature of the pavilion and *realia* in its description, see Cupane "Orte der Liebe", pp. 175–77.

are the ones to discover the couple's love affair and report it to the king through official letters written in formal chancery style.[70]

The subsequent legal scene that resolves the romance is modelled after similar scenes in the ancient romances. The death penalty for treason, which would have been imposed on the protagonists, is averted by the heroine's quick thinking. The witch is convicted and executed in place of the hero, while the lovers go free and happily head back to the castle – which once was the dragon's abode, but has now become the Golden Castle. As in the *Livistros* romance, the narrative structure is linear; the hero does not return to his homeland but remains in the new, foreign world that has granted him love and riches.[71]

4 Literary Afterlife

The development of the original vernacular romance nears its completion with *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*. *The Tale of Achilles* – the so-called Byzantine *Achilleid* – is one exception. It is also an original creation, but it nonetheless reveals the author's knowledge of the original romances, especially *Livistros,* in the flowery descriptive insertions (*ekphrases*) detailing magnificent gardens and the buildings contained within them) as well as the predominantly lyrical expression of the love theme. But later authors preferred instead to adapt preexisting materials and templates – primarily Western models, but also some oriental ones (*The Tale of Alexander and Semiramis*) and even some of Byzantine origin (such as the later versions of the *Alexander Romance* or the so-called *Byzantine Iliad*).[72] In these and other adapted texts, a clear preference for the biographical plot structure may be seen, in addition to a departure from the allegorical castle as a narrative space and the allegorizing of Eros, which is completely absent.[73]

The motif of the journey to the allegorical castle, however, does not disappear from Byzantine literature in general, but its hallmark changes, so to speak: no longer does the journey take place within the dominion of Eros; instead it moves into the realm of *Tyche* (Fortuna) and *Sophrosyne* (chastity). The

70 On the Byzantine flair of the romance, see Hunger, "Un roman byzantine".

71 See Cupane, "Lo straniero", pp. 120–21.

72 On the "Trojan tales" and on the Byzantine *Alexander romance* respectively, see the contributions by R. Lavagnini and U. Moennig in this volume.

73 This development is traced with exemplary clarity in Moennig, *Die Erzählung von Alexander und Semiramis*, pp. 41–69; on the predominantly biographical structure of the later texts, see Moennig, "Biographical Arrangement".

Consolatory Fable about Bad and Good Fortune (*Logos paregoretikos peri Dystychias kai Eutychias*) and the Poem *To Chastity* (*Eis ten Sophrosynen*) written by a certain Meliteniotes (who can probably be identified as the high church official Theodore, ca. 1320–1393) represent the genre of secular allegorical poem, a genre which was not very popular among Byzantine writers.[74] Both Meliteniotes and the anonymous author of the *Consolatory Fable* are obviously quite familiar with the vernacular romances – particularly *Livistros*, which the latter repeatedly quotes verbatim, while the former uses it as a source of inspiration for his description of the figurative adornment upon the enclosing wall.[75]

The broader dissemination of the original romances in later centuries is difficult to trace; the manuscripts in which the romances were transmitted at least prove that they were still popular throughout the 16th century. Perhaps the best scenario is the case of *Livistros*, whose popularity is documented by reworked versions produced on the island of Crete as well as in Naples in the second half of the 15th century. The latter in particular, which was recently published in an outstanding annotated edition,[76] presents a systematic reworking of the original romance in a simpler linguistic register and should be regarded as an independent literary work. The streamlining and expansions (the latter appear in the lyrical part of the romance) were made with an eye toward the narrative logic, but also reflect the literary tastes of an audience far from the courtly environment at Constantinople, who did not demand a high level of rhetorical sophistication, but obviously appreciated love poetry and romantic tales.

The reception history of original vernacular romances comes to an abrupt end in the 16th century. None of them found a way into one of the Venetian printing houses, which published cheap and easily digestible literary fare for Greeks in exile at that time; therefore, none of them could acquire the widespread impact and long-lasting popularity that shorter and especially satirical texts achieved in print.[77] Furthermore, Livistros, Velthandros, and Kallimachos lacked the charisma which allowed Alexander the Great or Digenis Akritis to

74 The former is edited in Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi*, pp. 637–91, the latter in E. Miller, *Poème allégorique de Mélitèniote*, (Notices et extraits des Manuscrits de la bibliothèque impériale et autres bibliothèques XIX 2), Paris 1857; see also respectively Cupane, "Il motivo del castello", pp. 246–63 and "Una passeggiata", pp. 84–90.

75 The numerous intertextual connections are enumerated and annotated in Agapitos, Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου, pp. 171–98.

76 *Livistros and Rodamne, Redaction V*, ed. Lendari.

77 Further thoughts on this subject may be found in Cupane, "Wie volkstümlich", pp. 597–99.

become strong role models for the young Greek nation in the 19th century.[78] And so, the artful creations of vernacular rhetoric written during the Palaiologan era were simply forgotten until they fell into the hands of philologists, who then failed to appreciate them, using them rather as a linguistic quarry for exploring the beginnings of Modern Greek language or as supposed examples of popular culture. Indeed, the last few decades have seen a movement toward aesthetic-literary appreciation, and the need for an interpretation of the romances "from within" has been clearly expressed.[79] But a proper investigation of late Byzantine vernacular fiction and its position within the wider context of Byzantine literature, as well as in the context of Eastern and Western medieval narratives, is still a task for the future.[80] The observations contained in this chapter should be understood as a small contribution to ongoing work in this area.

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78 See also the contributions by U. Moennig and C. Jouanno in this volume.

79 Especially by Agapitos – selected works include Agapitos, *Narrative Structure*, pp. 3–10, "Byzantine Literature", and "Αισθητική αποτίμηση".

80 That said, the beneficial work of a team of Italian scholars led by A. Pioletti must be mentioned here, as they have created a forum for comparative study of Western and Eastern medieval literature through the series "Medioevo Romanzo e Orientale".

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CHAPTER 5

The Adaptations of Western Sources by Byzantine Vernacular Romances

Kostas Yiavis

Introduction

The romances adapted from sources in other languages are a crucial part of late-Byzantine literature. Out of a total of 17 vernacular romances written (and, sporadically, cast to rhyme) from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, which are studied in the other chapters of the present volume, no less than seven (ie, a hefty 43%) are adaptations of non-Greek originals. Six revisit Western sources, and for reasons of space this chapter focuses on them.

It is sometimes held, and the argument may voice a more general impression, that the adaptations are somehow inferior to the original romances; that they emerged when the institutional tribulations of the declining Empire brought on a correlative narrowing of literature; that they reflect the cruder mindset of the provinces as opposed to the finesse of the imperial court.[1] Indeed, it was not easy for any writer to rise to the narrative complexity of *Livistros* or the dark, foreboding intensity of *Kallimachos*. And yet, there is a strong case to be made for the cultural significance of the adapted romances which was enormous.

The adaptations thrived on cultural heterogeneity: they were the main gateways of engaging with rich foreign traditions. They decisively contributed to the enhancement of vernacular authority by renewing subjects, concerns, vocabulary and imagery. They supported vernacular creativity by taking a more secular turn. Their printed versions were vital results of an unacknowledged part of Early Modern Greek production which embraced the needs of new audiences such as women and less educated readers. The adapted romances challenged the reading culture of the Church which retaliated with confrontations that remain largely unstudied.

Two factors have hobbled our understanding of the adaptations. First, Hellenists more often than not perceive them as a unified sub-genre which hangs together on the basis of common characteristics, the primary being that

1 Agapitos, *Ἡ ἐρωτικὴ διήγηση στὰ μεσαιωνικὰ χρόνια*, p. 35.

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they are "courtly romances"[2] because they stem from foreign sources which are uniformly "courtly". The truth of the matter is that the adaptations were composed over a span of three hundred years in different parts of the Empire within different cultural and literary contexts. The earliest, *The War of Troy*, at the end of the 13th century, is much closer to the original Komnenian and Palaiologan romances than the adaptations of the late 15th and 16th centuries.

The adaptations are also more generically diverse than it has been appreciated so far. The Greek adapters seem to have chosen enormously popular foreign works with exceptionally extensive circulation, which came from a variety of genres. One may identify a historical chronicle, a legend, a distant descendant of a Hellenistic novel, a retake on a chivalric epic, a couple of composite romances, that is, the derivatives of the original courtly romances proper adjusted for demotic readerships.

The second aspect of the adaptations which has received less attention than it deserves is the fact that medieval adaptions could be as inventive as original romances. Vernacular adaptations as a matter of course asserted their own canonical authority by displacing (as well as ostentatiously deferring to) their original sources. There is not one single Greek adaptation which attempted to follow religiously its source. Instead, the adapters absorbed and modified influences from other readings and segments from the oral tradition, casually borrowed across linguistic and cultural borders. Very often they mixed genres. In reality, the standard term "translations" is a misnomer for "adaptations".

Hellenists are becoming increasingly aware that this generic hybridity was a constitutional condition of all vernacular medieval literature, including the so-called "original" works.[3] The writers of the later original romances were products of the manuscript culture which was conducive to textual fluidity before print centralised language and literature.[4] The writer of *Livistros*, a secular love story, integrated elements from *Barlaam and Josaphat*, which had strongly religious character; the writer of *Velthandros* blended in parts from a saint's vita, *Life of Makarios the Roman*[5] and, conceivably, the sensual *Haft Paykar* by the Persian Niẓāmī Ganjavī.[6] Medieval writers did not need to be "original" (originality is not a medieval category), but they aimed to derive

2 See, for instance, Kriaras, *Βυζαντινὰ ἱπποτικὰ μυθιστορήματα*, pp. 134–40 and 199–214.

3 On the so-called "original" romances see the chapter by C. Cupane in this volume.

4 Agapitos, ibid., p. 27; Yiavis, "Persian Chronicles, Greek Romances", pp. 30–41; Moennig, "Literary Genres and Mixture", pp. 163–82.

5 See Moennig, "Literary Genres", pp. 166–73.

6 Yiavis, "Persian Chronicles, Greek Romances".

their authority from the authority of the sources they were bringing together. In a very important sense, the lines between "adaptations" and "originals" are sometimes very hard to distinguish in medieval literature.

This is not to say that we cannot tell the difference between an adaptation (no matter how free) and a freshly conceived romance (no matter how reliant on other sources). But it does propose that Hellenists heed more the capacity of the adaptations to send complex signals by fabricating their sources. As all medieval writers did, the anonymous Greek adapters craved for an ancient source which would authorize their own credibility. They deferred to such a source while obfuscating it at the same time by absorbing material from elsewhere. They both laid claim to and disclaimed their exemplars. This polyphony could result in a critique of the sources when they were positioned in such a manner that they could react to and modify each other. Their interchangeability allowed for multiple viewpoints, and precluded any dominating single interpretation of the story.[7]

If we wish to grasp the rise of vernacular Byzantine literature, we have no option but to initiate conversations about the literary merits and the cultural impact these adaptations provoked, and to put them on the broader map of the unabated cultural exchanges with Western and Eastern literature.

The *War of Troy*

Ὁ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος (hereafter, *The War of Troy*) is part of a widespread European phenomenon. Accounts of and references to the "matter of Troy" were ubiquitous in the Middle Ages.[8] The *WoT's* primary archetype, Benoît de St-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, whose oldest witness is dated to the twelfth century, survives in no less than thirty-nine manuscripts.[9] It is one of a handful of *romans d'antiquité* such as the *Roman de Thèbes* and the *Roman d'Enéas*. Benoît was translated into Latin by the even more popular Guido delle Colonne, *Historia destructionis Troiae*. He influenced directly Giovanni Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and indirectly John Lydgate's *Troy Book*. The number of vernacular accounts of the Trojan cycle in all European languages which originated under the influence of this set of works is too high to be verified, and their circulation too general to be traced in detail.

7 I have benefited generally from the analysis in Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde*, p. 139.

8 On the Troy matter in the Middle Ages see the chapter by R. Lavagnini in this volume.

9 Benoît de St-Maure, *Le roman de Troie*, ed. Constans, vol. 6, pp. 1–65.

The *romans d'antiquité* were so commanding, partly, because they were politically motivated. By emphasising the establishment of Rome by Aeneas, and claiming that the nations which had formed by the twelfth century in Western Europe prestigiously descended from that hero, the romances did no less than legitimize royal dynasties. In Geoffrey Monmouth's *Historia regum britanniae* Brutus, Aeneas' grandson, founds Britain. Wace's *Brut*, the English translation of *Historia*, is only one of the numerous *Bruts* to have become vastly successful. Benoît wrote his *Roman de Troie* in the court of Henry II, a Norman/Angevin patron of many clerks whose work supported his dubious claim to the throne of England. The *Roman* portrayed the historical interests of that claim.[10]

Historicism does not explain all Trojan references in the literature of the period, though. The Trojan War was an irresistibly captivating tale which was, often, received and appreciated irrespective of political agendas. It is not always obvious, for instance, how the Troy-related opening to the Middle English chivalric romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (14th century), in all its numerous recensions, is always political.[11]

It is instructive to take a step back and consider how Benoît's originary romance cumulatively produced its authority. In his Prologue, Benoît complained that Homer had made too many mistakes. He incorporated the stratagem used by Dares, *Excidio Troiae Historia* in his own Prologue: that the learned Cornelius Nepos came across Dares' original book in Greek, which Cornelius translated into Latin word for word. To these layers of constructed authority Benoît added one more: since Dares (who actually fought in the War) is more reliable than Homer (who only heard about it), Benoît vowed to follow Dares: he would be a mere translator without changing an iota.[12]

Needless to say, Benoît wrote a totally different book: he turned the short, bare, chronicle-like prose by Dares (under eight thousand words) to a spacious metrical narrative of 30,316 lines; he added Medea's infatuation with Jason;[13] he invented the affair between Troilus and Briseida; he turned to another

10 By way of example of the extensive bibliography on the issue, see S. Crane, "Anglo-Norman Cultures", pp. 42–3, and C. Boswell, "Latinitas", p. 132.

11 See *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. J.R. R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, 2nd edition revised by N. Davis, Oxford 1967, ll. 1–15.

12 Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde*, p. 44.

13 Possibly drawn from Euripides, or Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, Book 3, ll. 451–71, and 615–64, or Apollodorus, *The Library*, I.ix.23 and 28, and absent in Dares.

source, Dictys, *Ephemeris belli Troiani*, to cover the adventures after the sack of Troy.[14]

Foremost, Benoît modified the pitch: he deviated from Dares' martial and epic tone towards a refined, delicate and suspenseful romance which was heavily indebted to the concerns and the subtle psychology of courtly love – at its height in the twelfth century. Love had played no substantial part in Dares: heroes had been attracted to heroines (and vice versa) on account of their beauty, not the nobility of their souls (§§10, 27). Helen had been besotted, not quite in love, with Paris only to regret it later (§11). Love had not inspired magnificent deeds: nothing good had come out of Achilles' passion for Polyxena but betrayal and death (§§ 27, 30, 34).[15]

Benoît, by contrast, centralised love – and courtly love at that. He interlinked four love affairs (Jason-Medea, Paris-Helen, Achilles-Polyxena and Diomedis/Troilus-Briseida) with the Trojan War which he turned to a chivalric campaign. The narrative relied on the idea that nobility in rank and soul ended in prowess in the battlefield, which in turn entailed, according to courtly conventions, true love. Benoît's characters were no longer the one-dimensionally fierce warriors of Dares, but were capable of delicacy and yearning. Benoît challenged the expectations of his intended readers who must have been demanding and sophisticated.[16]

The Greek *War of Troy* located itself on the tension between the courtliness of *Roman de Troie* and the epic geography of Dares. On one hand, it retained the structure based on the four love-affairs introduced by Benoît. Dozens of details were drawn from some evidently chivalric source: the battles were jousts in which heroes unseated their opponents (for example, ll. 3610–11, 3738–41). Vriseida encouraged Diomidis, her subsequent suitor, by giving him a sleeve as a token of interest (ll. 6521–2). Medea boldly invited Jason to spend a night of passion in her room (ll. 412, 523–4).

14 Ed. W. Eisenhut, Dictys Cretensis, *Ephemeridos belli Troiani libri a Lucio Septimio ex Graeco in Latinum Sermonem translati*, Leipzig 1973. Generally on medieval strategies of rewriting, see Kelly, *The Conspiracy of Allusion*, esp. 121–70.

15 All Dares has to say of Achilles' "love" is "quibus obvius fit Achilles: Polyxenam contemplatur, figit animum, amare vehementer eam coepit. [T]unc ardore conpulsus odiosam in amore vitam consumit": see Dares Phrygius, *De excidio Troiae historia*, Book 27, ed. F. Meister, Leipzig 1873, p. 33, ll. 2–4.

16 Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde*, pp. 78–9. At p. 85 Windeatt quoted an interesting example: Diomedis upon seeing Briseida made his love overtures, the young woman replied with a lengthy speech (ll. 13619–80) which in its equivocation painfully contrasted with her recent promises to Troilus. It must have been a shock to courtly audiences to have a "true lover" discredited so quickly.

But there is a critical reconfiguration of love. In the *War of Troy*, despite the courtly setting, the complications of chivalry were flattened. The adapter had no solid interest in the culture of arms, and the extensive descriptions in Benoît were curtailed.[17] All love was proclaimed to be flawed and women fickle.[18] Love hardly inspired the heroes to deeds of valour (Achilles refrained from fighting altogether), it consistently caused devastation. Medea's daring behaviour was never shown to problematize other principles, such as Christian modesty, which is a major conflict in the courtly romance proper.

Benoît's narrative of a theme close to the heart of European aristocracy became in the hands of the anonymous adapter of the *War of Troy* decidedly more demotic. Time and again, the Greek version deflated the idea of knightly bravery: Achilles, for instance, was "blinded" by love and his not fearing death was perceived as "imprudent" and definitely not brave (ll. 9971–5). The *War of Troy's* Medea was more shrewd and less courtly: she sought to bind Jason with an oath that he would make an honest woman out of her before she revealed to him the way to the Golden Fleece (ll. 413–14). The romance rarely passed on a chance to drive home that when a young woman trusts a man, there ensues sexual permissiveness which is condemnable (ll. 715–16).

Somehow this distance which the *War of Troy* placed between itself and the courtly ideals of the *Roman de Troie* brought it closer to Dares whose muscular narrative had had no space for love, as we have seen. This might explain the fact that the adapter avoided acknowledging any debt to Benoît whatsoever. He dropped the highly personal Prologue, in which Benoît had promised to follow as a mere translator Dares' wondrous account.[19] The Greek adapter interspersed his story with references to Dares, which do not always correspond to the acknowledgments in the original French romance.

The language of the Greek adaptation has vernacular flair, facility and skill. It is vivid, plain and unpretentious. It concocted, scholars have observed, awkward Gallicisms, but it also made attempts to create the vocabulary in Greek to sustain the original knightly story.[20] What we should add is that the *War of Troy* did not translate word for word, it adapted, and to do so, it employed Greek colloquialisms, and tapped into the demotic language which had been

17 Jeffreys, "Byzantine Romances: Eastern or Western?", p. 229.

18 *War of Troy*, ed. Papathomopoulos/Jeffreys, p. 486, v. 9313: ὅλες εἰσὶ ψεμματινές, τινὰς μὴν τὶς πιστεύει.

19 Benoît de Ste Maure, *Roman de Troie*, ll. 84–144, ed. Constans, vol. 1, pp. 1–9.

20 Papathomopoulos/Jeffreys (eds.), *Ὁ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος*, pp. lx–lxi and lv.

current in the popular tradition of folk songs that eventually resulted in the vernacular epic of *Digenis Akritis*.[21]

Did the *War of Troy* articulate a bashful, more conservative, lower-class criticism of the aristocratic preoccupation with courtly romance and love, which had been defying conventions of morality? Was the Greek adapter influenced at places by a more moralizing recension of the *Roman de Troie*, like Guido delle Colonne's didactic, and immensely diffused throughout Europe, *Historia destructionis Troiae*? Literary criticism will have a lot to answer.

Elizabeth Jeffreys, an authoritative editor of the Greek text, has proposed since 1991 that it must have been composed in an area in which Western/Frankish culture was particularly influential, and thought that this area must be Morea.[22] The position has led the field.[23] Jeffreys has recently dated the text firmly between 1267 (when the Treaty of Viterbo was signed transferring Achaia from Guillaume Villehardouin to Charles d'Anjou) and 1281 (the year of death of Leonardo da Veroli, Guillaume's book-loving chancellor). The "matière de Troie" appealed to the Angevins, the argument goes, and there was no one likelier than the cultivated Leonardo to have commissioned the translation.[24]

While the proposition is convincing, I should also like to suggest that we take into account the fundamental mobility of medieval literature: texts, stories and motifs circulated over the divides of languages and traditions in inconceivably changeable ways, and needed not a political agenda to attract readers' attention. To put it differently, it is not always obvious why such a much-loved text as Benoît's with countless versions all over Europe until the fourteenth century (not all of which were political, as we have seen) could not have caught the eye of, say, Constantinopolitan merchants trading with Provence, who might have commissioned a Frankish-Greek translator.[25] The Greek adaptation took a very dispassionate view of the Trojans (as well as the Greeks), and Aeneas was disparaged as a pathetic traitor (ll. 12225–33), a bad councilor (ll. 11278–81), disrespectful to his king (l. 11287) and greedy (l. 11441–3): it is not immediately apparent how the Angevins, Aeneas' implied descendants, derived any honour from association with him. There is little

21 Among many examples of colloquialisms see ll. 376–7, 7631, 11180. For demotic figures of speech, see the tricolon in v. 323, and the repetition in ll. 5330–1.

22 E. Jeffreys, "Place of Composition", pp. 312–24.

23 See, for instance, the recent Lendari, "Gazes in Love Scenes", p. 19.

24 E. Jeffreys, "Byzantine Romances: Eastern or Western?", pp. 235–37.

25 I thank Carolina Cupane for the point that as a matter of fact we know that a manuscript of Benoît must have circulated in Constantinople immediately after the conquest of 1204: Cupane referred to Folena, "La Romania d'oltremare", pp. 272–73, and also Jacoby, "La littérature française dans les états latins", pp. 633–4.

distinctively Moreotic in the *War of Troy*. The text does not testify to any curiosity regarding an ethnic origin. At no point does it read like an appeal to a class with an emergent regional consciousness.[26]

Old Knight

The romance which scholars know as *Πρέσβυς ἱππότης* (henceforth, *The Old Knight*) is the only adaptation that survives as a fragment. The story is adapted from *Guiron le courtois* which is the third great Arthurian cycle after *Lancelot-Grail* and *Tristan*.[27] *Guiron* circulated extensively among languages and genres. There have been identified forty manuscripts only in French, to which one should add an even larger number of lost and latent witnesses as evinced in catalogue entries in various libraries. The cycle's heroes became so prominent that they made it to architectural decorations and heraldry everywhere in Western Europe. Deep was the influence of the cycle on important works such as Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (Ferrara 1516) and Luigi Alemanni's *Gyrone il cortese* (Paris 1541).[28] The oldest core of the cycle, whose first stories must have been composed in the 1240's, consists of three parts each relating the adventures of one protagonist: the *Roman de Méliades*, the *Roman du Guiron* and the *Suite Guiron*.[29]

A pattern seems to be already in place, which involves Greek as well as Western adaptations: against the background of these frightfully popular stories, adapters felt free to extract any set, or any one of the adventures, and reshape the compilation before they presented it – in this case – in French, or many of the Italian vernaculars.[30] Amid this exhilaratingly fluid creativity, new

26 For a different opinion see Shawcross, "Re-inventing the Homeland". Of interest is the analysis in Page, *Being Byzantine*, pp. 177–242, esp. 242 on the regional (not ethnic) identity in Frankish Morea.

27 For the connection, see Lagomarsini, "Rustichello da Pisa", p. 53.

28 On the manuscripts of the cycle see Cigni, "Per la storia del Guiron", pp. 295–316; idem, "Mappa redazionale del *Guiron*", pp. 85–117; and idem, "Manuscrits", pp. 187–217. On its wider resonance, see also Allaire, "Arthurian Art in Italy", pp. 205–32. On its influence on Ariosto, see Morato, "Meliadus, Rodomonte", pp. 287–308.

29 See Morato, *Il ciclo di Guiron le Courtois*, pp. 37–73, and Lagomarsini, *Les Aventures des Bruns*, p. 75. For the dating of the cycle, see Lathuillère, *Guiron le courtois*, pp. 31–4. On the fluid relations among the three parts, which sometimes merged together, see Lagomarsini, "La tradizione compilativa delle *Suite Guiron*", pp. 98–127.

30 For an example of creative accommodation of material from *Guiron* by Ariosto, see Morato, "La scomparsa", pp. 78–83.

episodes were added. A group of later accretions are attributed to Rustichello of Pisa who was famously the co-author of Marco Polo's *Travels*. Rustichello wrote, in French, one more Arthurian text, the so-called *Compilazione guironiana*.[31] Both his works are now dated between 1275 and 1300.[32] The first episode of that *Compilazione* (*Viel Chevalier, VC*) is the closest we now have to what the Greek adapter of the *Old Knight* might have before him.[33] Typically, he ended with something very different to his original.

In Rustichello's version King Arthur's celebrated Round Table was, as custom had it, gathered for Pentecost. On occasions such as this in the Arthurian cycles, the king was time and again bored until an adventure was had, and Rustichello did not deviate. A fearfully huge knight, unknown to all, appeared, and, true to form, challenged the entire court: the young woman who was with him would be offered to whomever could defeat him in combat. The old knight gave his opponents the benefit of a weapon. In due course, he vanquished Palamède, then Gauvain and then another dozen of the chosen knights, not sparing the superlative Tristan and Lancelot. Upon leaving, the old knight told the king that he had only wanted to know who the best knight was, and to ascertain that the Old Table (comprising mostly the fathers of the current incumbents) was superior to the new fellowship. The old knight departed, and later helped a widow, sister of a noble man. When that deed was over, the old hero sent a letter to Arthur in which he disclosed his name, "Branor le Brun".

The Greek text, such parts that exist,[34] generally agrees with this plot, but it is obvious that it did not follow the French original line for line. Pierre Breillat in his definitive 1938 study of the fragment might have been unqualifiedly precise when he suggested that the Greek adapter possibly worked from memory, and used no written exemplar whatsoever.[35]

Some of the divergences which the *Old Knight* introduced might help scholars reassess the work in time. First, the Greek romance replaced the supernatural element of the French analogue with some delightfully scathing sarcasm. The challenger in the original story was formidably prodigious in size and appearance, a giant, so much so that the Table thought that he was unreal: "Et estoit

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31 The detailed summary in Lathuillère, *Guiron le courtois* remains the closest we have to a modern edited text. See also Løseth, *Le roman en prose de Tristan*, pp. 423–74.

32 Lagomarsini, *Les aventures*, pp. 67–9.

33 Breillat, "La Table Ronde en Orient", pp. 322–3 also thought that the *OK* was not a faithful translation.

34 The *OK* starts just before the duel with Palamedes and breaks off just before the name is revealed in the letter.

35 Breillat, "La Table Ronde en Orient", pp. 312–13. The suggestion was renewed by Grivaud, "Literature", p. 279.

mout grant faut qu'il n'estoit jeant".[36] This part has sadly not been preserved in the Greek text, but it is difficult to envisage how the chilling exuberance of *Guiron* could be borne by the ageing knight who "grins… and scolds the silliness of the boy" (ll. 56–7) who came to fight him.

The Greek old knight did not need to be scary to inspire awe: his superiority took the shape of blokey sarcasm to the younger men he felled.[37] In the second part of the story, the old man became the receiving end of mockery when the defenders of the noble widow were unimpressed with his scrawny and decrepit body, and taunted him with some amusingly unforgiving comments. The joke is at their expense, however: readers know what the old boy can do, although he is a bit worse for wear.[38] The sarcasm, then, is a brilliant invention on the part of the adapter: it draws readers in by privileging them with more information than some of the characters have.

Another difference from the original is the direction the adapter took in adding extra layers to his perceived exemplar. He confidently inserted a string of offhand allusions to Homer.[39] Further references to classical culture have been identified.[40] When the adapter muddled the details in the original, he unblinkingly injected clips from various other sources on Arthurian legends which had been circulating at the time.[41] The result is a polyphonic text whose plurality is as indicative of the adapter's craft as it is indicative of the constitutional "intertextuality" of medieval romance in general.

In a certain respect, the Greek adapter achieved more complexity and psychological nuance than the French original. The sharp rivalry between the two champions of the Round Table, Tristan and Lancelot, and the deep, affectionate friendship of Palamedes and Gauvain were captured by the Greek analogue,

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36 *Rustichello da Pisa*, ed. Cigni, 3.5. Helpfully, the text (= VC) is reproduced in the latest edition of the *Old Knight*, Rizzo Nervo, *Il Vecchio Cavaliere,* pp. 58–139: 60 (with facing Italian translation). All translations into English are mine.

37 Carbonaro, "Il cronòtopo del *Vecchio Cavaliere*", pp. 369–70 called the hero's sarcasm at this point "atavica ellenica superiorità".

38 See also the comments in Breillat, "La Table Ronde en Orient", pp. 321–2.

39 To take one example, Arthur preparing to go to battle drives away a worrying Guinevere with words which ring similar to Hector's to Andromache. Compare, «Ἄπιθι (…) γυναικωνίτιν εὐπρεπῶς κοσμούσα καὶ παιδίσκες» (ll. 140–1) with *Iliad* 6.490–2. See Breillat, "La Table Ronde en Orient", pp. 318–20.

40 See Garzya, "'Matière de Bretagne' a Bisanzio", pp. 1036–7.

41 When the Old Knight unhorsed Palamedes, the latter dropped «αἰσχύνης ἔμπλεος» ("in shame", l. 23), a detail not available in Rustichello (compare 5.12) and apparently borrowed from the so-called *Tristano veneto*, a version which was popular in Italy: see Breillat, "La Table Ronde en Orient", p. 317.

whereas such sentiments are not evident at all in Rustichello's version.[42] It is, moreover, intriguing that the *Old Knight* took care to emphasize the hero's loyalty to his lord and master, King Arthur, after he had embarrassed all the latter's knights, as opposed to the French text which was nonchalant in voicing the vassal's allegiance.[43] Perhaps it was this "political" component which inspired the latest *Old Knight* editor Francesca Rizzo Nervo's thought-provoking hypothesis that the romance could be read as an allegory for the old Byzantine aristocracy which resented the new values of the dominant Western powers in the East, although it was prone to them.[44]

Few studies of the *Old Knight* resisted the temptation of discussing its archaising, antiquated language and its garbled syntax. Hans-Georg Beck called the adaptation "unbeholfenen Versuch", and the evaluation has rather stuck.[45] One wonders, however, whether the literary qualities of the poem have not been dismissed a little too easily. There is indeed a fair number of clumsy lines such as v. 170, "'Ο δ' ἔφη· 'Μου καθ'ἡδονὴν ὑπάρχει σου τὸ ῥῆμα'" (He said: 'Your words are a delight to me'" But next to these there are lines such as v. 104 "Αὐτός δε ἀγέραστος λειφθεὶς λειφθήσεται ἁμίλλης" (May he himself be devoid of both reward and contest) which treat readers to some finesse. And there is occasionally the understated elegance of a hidden rhythm: the time-worn warrior was v. 9, "Ὥσπερ τὶς λίθος ἀκλινής" (as an unswerving rock), a simile counterpointed by v. 12 "Ὥσπερ τὶς λίθος ἀφεθεὶς" (as a rock hurled [by a catapult]).[46]

When the study of the poem is placed within a broader frame of comparative literature, it will yield interesting results. *Guiron* told the story of an older generation: Branor was advanced in years, Mèliades was Tristan's father, Lac was Erec's. These were all heroic knights, extraordinary fighters, to be sure, but they were not exactly courtiers. They were less shown to be members of a fellowship, and more individual heroes, larger-than-life drifters. Might there be some mileage in the idea that the Greek adapter was attracted by the maverick, outsider type that dictated himself the terms of his compliance with organised authority, and that gave rise to important romances between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries, ranging from the Persian *Shahnameh* to the Greek *Digenes Akritis* to the French *Guiron*?

42 Contrast, ll. 92–6, 101–4 and 28–30 with VC, 7–9 and 5.16, respectively. On the point of "caratterizzazione psicologica", see Garzya, "'Matière de Bretagne' a Bisanzio", p. 1035.

43 Contrast OK, ll. 150–64 with VC, 15.2.

44 Rizzo Nervo (ed.), *Il Vecchio Cavaliere*, p. 24.

45 Beck, *Geschichte*, p. 138.

46 The two lines were mentioned by Breillat, "La Table Ronde", p. 320, n.6.

One question which has attracted attention is the provenance and date of the *Old Knight*. Pierre Breillat suggested that the adaptation occurred in Cyprus, or by a Cypriot, on linguistic arguments which today may look not completely clinching.[47] Most subsequent scholars concurred with varying degrees of enthusiasm.[48] Some others disagreed completely.[49] Roderick Beaton's portrayal of an Eastern Mediterranean, including Cyprus, conversant with "matière arthurienne" is difficult to be superseded.[50] As far as dating is concerned, consensus ascribes *Old Knight* to the late 13th or 14th centuries.[51]

Apollonius of Tyre

It would have been practically impossible for the adapter of *Διήγησις Ἀπολλωνίου* (henceforth, "unrhymed Apollonius") to miss one of the numerous variants of the story. Ever since *Historia Apollonii Regii Tyri* appeared in Late Antiquity, its various forms had permeated all European traditions. Casual, throw-away allusions in the early medieval centuries confirm the fact that it was a compelling read in Norse, Danish, Spanish, French, Dutch, Czech, Polish and Hungarian. Some languages had a number of different versions each: in English alone there are recorded seven diverse takes on the original story until the Renaissance, including one by John Gower ("Tale of Apollonius of Tyre" in *Confessio amantis*) and Shakespeare (*Pericles*). Today *Historia* survives in no less than one hundred manuscripts.[52]

47 Breillat, "La Table Ronde", p. 325n.2.

48 Kechagioglou, *Απολλώνιος της Τύρου*, p. 351 believed that it is Cypriot, and cited a long list of linguistic evidence. Grivaud, "Literature", 280 was sceptical but discovered affinities with vernacular Cypriot literature of the late Middle Ages. Rizzo Nervo, *Il Vecchio Cavaliere*, pp. 32–3 sketched out the presence of Rustichello's *Compilazione* in Cyprus but rejected the argument for Cypriot origin.

49 Garzya, "'Matière de Bretagne' a Bisanzio", p. 1040 proposed other sites of osmosis between East and West, such as Romania or Byzantium itself instead. Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi bizantini*, pp. 33–4 preferred a place of Venetian or Genoese influence (such as Cyprus, Euboea or Chios) but touched on linguistic affinities with courtly Constantinople.

50 Beaton, *Medieval Greek* Romance, p. 143. Additionally, see Kechagioglou, *Απολλώνιος της Τύρου*, p. 349.

51 So the editor Rizzo Nervo, *Il Vecchio Cavaliere*, p. 32. Kechagioglou, *Απολλώνιος της Τύρου*, p. 349, n.8 seems to opt for the early 14th century. Breillat, "La Table Ronde", pp. 323–24 places the work between the end of the 13th and the first half of the 15th century.

52 The two surviving Latin manuscripts are dated to the late fifth and early sixth centuries: see Kortekaas, *The Story of Apollonius*, p. 3. The authoritative study of the European versions and their interconnections is Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre*, esp. pp. xi–xii and 46.

We have known for many years that the earliest Greek version, the unrhymed *Apollonius*, was modelled on the Tuscan *Storia d'Apollonio di Tiro* which has been dated, perhaps somewhat questionably, to 1320–40.[53] The text comprises 870 unrhymed fifteen-syllable lines. Two schools of thought have led the debate on its date and provenance. The first places it between the early 14th century and the start to the 16th. A strong argument came from Carolina Cupane who located the adaptation in the Frankish-held Morea by the end of the 14th century. Cupane hypothesized that it might have been a descendant of the Florentine Niccolò Acciaiuoli, a learned friend of Petrarch and Boccaccio, who was in Morea between 1338 and 1341 as Catherine de Valois's courtier, who brought with him a manuscript of *Apollonio di Tiro*.[54] The proponent of the other school, the editor of *Apollonius*, George Kechagioglou has opted for the south-east Aegean, probably Cyprus, sometime in 1350–75 on the strength of linguistic idioms and intertextual references.[55]

It has been shown that an intrinsic characteristic of the unrhymed *Apollonius* is the imposition of a Christian setting on a plot which was originally pagan.[56] This is absolutely accurate: the "Christianization" of the story had begun with the Latin *Historia* that had eliminated explicit paganism, and the Greek adapter took it from there by adding details.[57] It is easy to see how the heroic ethos of the *Historia* was conducive to a medieval Christian turn: Apollonius had the making of the perfect Christian king, he was wise, virtuous and magnanimous.[58] Scholars agree that the Greek romance is entrenched in religious iconography: the revival of the protagonist's wife echoes the Christian resurrection (as well as the use of the motif of miraculous revivals in Hellenistic

53 See Klebs, *Die Erzählung von Apollonius von Tyre*, pp. 452–54. For an edition of *Storia*, scholars still use L. Del Prete, *Storia d'Apollonio di Tiro*. R*omanzo greco dal latino ridotto in volgare italiano nel secolo XIV*, Lucca 1861. An edition of *Historia* is in Kortekaas, *The Story of Apollonius*.

54 Cupane, «Λογοτεχνική παραγωγή», p. 379, and ead., *Romanzi cavallereschi bizantini*, pp. 29, 570 and 607, n.46.

55 Kechagioglou, *Απολλώνιος της Τύρου*, p. 341.

56 By Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 140. His lead was followed recently by Zafraka, "Texts in Distant Contexts", p. 155, and Carbonell, «Οι νεοελληνικές διασκευές του Απολλώνιου της Τύρου», vol. 1, p. 170.

57 Kortekaas, *The Story of Apollonius*, pp. 20–2. See also Klebs, *Die Erzählung von Apollonius von Tyre*, p. 454, and Beck, *Geschichte*, p. 137.

58 Carbonell, *Οι νεοελληνικές διασκευές του Απολλώνιου της Τύρου*», vol. 1, p. 169.

romance);[59] the noble-born lady becomes the prioress of a convent in order to protect her honour until she is reunited with her husband;[60] the couple's wedding is officiated by a bishop.[61]

Perhaps one way to push discussion a little further is to veer away from the study of themes, and think in terms of literary criticism. The story of the unrhymed version is framed by the temporality of Apollonius' life: it starts out when he is a young men and eager to make his mark, and ends up when the hero dies in old age and is succeeded to the throne by his child.[62] This cyclicism, a staple of medieval thought, is profoundly a-temporal. The adapter made sure that his readers understood that the story had taken place in an unspecified, distant past: the *incipit* vaguely dated the story sometime "after Ascension" and "when the Apostles were teaching"; names such as "Apollonius" and "Antiochus" sounded Hellenistic, if not older. And yet, the colloquialisms and the texture of its language must have unmistakably cast the unrhymed *Apollonius* as a "modern", vernacular text to the readers of its day.

The combined result is perpetual presentness. The medieval mind perceived ancient heroes as powerfully relevant because they had got something to teach. And because they had got something to teach, they became perennially present, parables, figures beyond time. It is not that the medieval adapter really thought that Apollonius was his contemporary, but his was exactly the same mental process that led manuscripts illuminators such as the Orosius Master in the late 14th and early 15th century to depict Homeric heroes as medieval knights. The unrhymed *Apollonius* must have been meant to be an allegory of the *Rota fortunae*, the whimsical ever-turning Wheel of Fortune which had been Christianized by Boethius and had become an important theme in medieval literature and art.[63] None of us, the adapter appears to have offered to say, not even good, clever princes, can overpower Fate.

59 For the point see Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 140. The motif of apparent death of one of the lovers is known as *Scheintod*. It is a theme that *Apollonius* shares with the Hellenistic romance *Leukippe*, as well as the later *Kallimachos*, *Livistros*, *Velthandros*, *Imperios* and *Erotokritos*; see Beaton, "*Erotokritos* and the History of the Novel", pp. 8–9, who associated the lover's "rebirth" with "the idea of secular love as the equivalent of a mystical revelation".

60 As in the *Merchant of Venice*, 3.4, ll. 28–32, ed. J.L. Halio, Oxford 1993. Further on the motif, see Yiavis, *Imperios*, comments on v. 695.

61 Yiavis, ibid., comments on v. 509.

62 Kechagioglou, *Απολλώνιος της Τύρου*, p. 292 saw time in the unrhymed *Apollonius* as a linear sequence from youth to old age.

63 On the figure of Fortune in Western and Medieval Greek Literature see Cupane, "Κατέλαβες τὰ ἀμφίβολα πρόσωπα".

One of the issues about *Apollonius* which remains unopened is what kind of a genre it belongs to. It is certainly a romance, but one could not call it "homiletic": hardly ever is its religion overtly didactic, and the plot never really subordinates to moralizing.[64] The main character does not fall because of a sin, and he does not redeem himself through penitence and prayer. As a matter of fact, *Apollonius* seems to occupy a generic position between a (secularised) saint's life and a legendary romance. One might propose to call it a *Speculum vitae*, an exemplary life, of the sort that was prodigiously popular throughout Europe from the 14th century until well into the 16th, as its Latin precedent had been in the 5th and 6th centuries. Romances such as the so-called "Constance cycle", even *Sir Isumbras*, *Emar*é and *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, represent a hero (or a heroine) whose fortitude sees them through extraordinary hardship. Usually, there is a moral outlook, the protagonist is tested by fate, and they are separated from their family, only to be reunited in the end. The religious tone can (but need not) be high.

Apollonius was part of that group of previously unrhymed works (such as *Theseid*, *Imperios* and *Alexandros*) by means of which the fledgling book industry in Venice constructed the public demand for rhymes and, alongside, the market for vernacular Greek literature. In 1524 the story was printed in the form of c.1,900 rhymed fifteen-syllable lines. It is a proof of the fact that the early Greek adapters perceived their work as an "international" phenomenon, and not as an internal intralinguistic affair, that the rhymester, the Cretan Gavriil Akontiános, chose as his source not the Greek unrhymed version but the 2,304 eleven-syllable lines of the *Cantare d'Apollonio di Tiro* (1475) by the Florentine Antonio Pucci. That adaptation was finished by 1501.[65]

The rhymed *Apollonius* opened with a clearer reference to its didactic purpose and a sharper vision of the Wheel of Fortune theme than the unrhymed variant (see ll. 9–24). Interestingly, it is not Divine Providence but the hero's skills and determination which "turn the wheel" (ll. 409–34). The romance exploited some distinctive courtly elements: the hero changed his fate by being excellent at dancing and music playing music. In addition, the rhymester indulged in giving the most detailed technical description of the lists in the joust where the hero fights in all Greek romances. Nevertheless, the rhymed *Apollonius* undermined any courtliness that may have slipped in when a poor fisherman's practical spirit is shown to be effortlessly superior to king Apollonius' histrionics when he is in exile (ll. 363–72).

64 Cf., Mehl, *The Middle English Romances*, p. 121.

65 Kechagioglou, *Απολλώνιος της Τύρου*, pp. 867 and 1283.

Theseid

This is the only adaptation into Greek of a named poet. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Teseida, delle nozze d'Emilia* (*c.*1340) set out to tell the story of the titular Athenian hero, Teseo, but from Book III until the end in Book XII it veered to the competition between two Theban princes, Arcita and Palemone, for the heart of Emilia, daughter of the Amazon queen. The adapter retained the original eleven-syllable *ottave rime* form which is unprecedented in Greek vernacular romance, but inserted the usual fifteen-syllable rhyming couplets to a limited extent, in parts such as the preambles to the Books. There survive two manuscripts and a 1529 Venetian printed chapbook. The Greek tradition of the poem is fluid, and there are differences among the variants. Only two Books have been published by modern editors so far.[66]

The Cretan provenance of the adaptation has been argued for on the strength of a string of dialectal elements.[67] More recently the theory was suggested that the setting of the poem is conducive to the expansive policy and the cultural syncretism of the Frankish duchy of Athens between 1388 and 1444 under the Florentine d'Acciaiuoli. Consequently, the argument ran, *Theseid* must have been written there and was dated to the late fourteenth or the early fifteenth century.[68]

Boccaccio employed the old medieval technique of placing his chivalric romance on Greek soil. He painted a vivid Greek background with the plot unfolding in Athens and Thebes, and a swarm of knights, who participated in the joust in Book VI, coming from Greek lands. It might have been this ethnic patina that attracted the adapter to *Teseida* in the first place.[69] Errors in myth-

66 Book I by Follieri, *Il Teseida Neogreco*, and Book VI by Olsen, "The Greek Translation", pp. 275–301.

67 Morgan, *Cretan Poetry*, pp. 125–6.

68 See Kaklamanis, «Ὁ Πρόλογος», pp. 117–18 who dismissed the Cretanisms as later accretions. Also unconvinced by the Cretan claim is Panayotakis, "The Italian Background", p. 287, n.21. For other opinions, see Carpinato, "Altre osservazioni", p. 182 who decided on the Peloponnese of the end of the fifteenth century (see also Spadaro, *Contributo*, p. 14). One of the two modern editors thinks that the adaptation took place in the second half of the fifteenth century: see Follieri, "La Versione in greco volgare del Teseida del Boccaccio", pp. 75–6, and eadem, *Il Teseida Neogreco*, p. 5.

69 For this compelling idea see Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 142. It now appears less conclusive, though, that Boccaccio was inspired by the Greek epic hero Ἀκρίτης for his Arcita as was argued by Kahane, "Akritas and Arcita".

ological details and the use of Italianised forms of Greek proper names puzzle readers regarding the profile of the adapter.[70]

By today's standards, one would expect that a translation of Boccaccio ought to have been a painstakingly faithful one: the poet had been enjoying formidable renown throughout Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries;[71] *Teseida*, in particular, was everywhere in Italy as the sixty-six extant manuscripts testify;[72] Chaucer regarded it as an authority with which he engaged in his "Knight's Tale".[73] And yet, *Theseid* departed from the Italian text in some very profound ways. Although the adapter seems to have followed his source quite closely, he did not shy from adding seven stanzas of his own invention (Bk I, 6, and Bk VII, 19–25). His rendition of some of the more elaborate mythological scenes differed from Boccaccio in that the Greek text reflected the adapter's own level of education and vernacular sensitivities; he might even have absorbed interpretations, which he drew from other sources, such as Italian commentaries on *Teseida*.[74] He frequently inserted no-sense line padding which accounts for the discrepancy between the Italian eleven-syllable lines and his fifteen-syllables. He resorted to the vocabulary, tropes and mannerisms of late Byzantine romance, such as some very imaginative compounds which are not always quite there in the original.[75]

One fundamental difference between the Italian romance and its Greek adaptation is that *Theseid* vernacularised (the word is meant in its cultural, not its linguistic sense) an unusually subtle piece by a learned poet. Boccaccio's *Teseida* negotiated the fine line between the private and the public spheres: the poet's intimate frustration over being rejected by Fiammetta, the object of his desire, was projected onto the tale of Arcite's and Palemone's troubled love for Emilia. That courtly tale became, then, an allegory of rejected love, from which the poet hoped to extract comfort for his future: as the reversal of the Wheel of Fortune separated and brought together those mythical lovers, so Fiammetta would, in time, Boccaccio trusted, look at him with affection.[76] In the best medieval traditions, Boccaccio deferred to the ancient genre of epic romance, and then gave it a twist.

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70 See Olsen "The Model", p. 315.

71 Tournoy, *Boccaccio in Europe*.

72 Agostinelli, "A Catalogue of the Manuscripts of *Il Teseida*".

73 Wallace, *Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio*, chaps 5, 6.

74 For several of these digressions, see Follieri, "Gli elementi". Olsen, "The Model", pp. 316–18, speculated that the adapter used an annotated manuscript of *Teseida*.

75 For example, see «γλυκοκερά» at l. 115. For the point, Cupane, "Δεῦτε, προσκαρτερήσατε", pp. 151–52 and Kaklamanis, «Ὁ Πρόλογος», pp. 122–29.

76 Kaklamanis, « Ὁ Πρόλογος», p. 115.

Such tensions went over the head of the Greek adapter. His picture of love was entirely in line with demotic conceptions of ardour: genuine, strongly-felt, touching, but essentially hearty and untroubled by considerations of generic conflicts. This is true both of the manuscript version and the more popularized chapbook.[77]

Florios and Platziaflora

The story of a Christian woman and a Muslim prince who fall in love in childhood, and marry later in life was another consummate success all over medieval Europe. Besides *Florios*, there are two French versions (the older "aristocratic" and the newer "popular"), each represented by several manuscripts dated from 1288 to 1350. Scholars previously thought that this was the initial text, but recently a Spanish chronicle (the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*) has been proposed as a contender.[78] There are versions in Middle English (in four varying witnesses deriving directly from the French); Middle High German and Middle Dutch, as well as an Icelandic saga (which may have been translated from Spanish). In addition, there is an Italian group (which has affinities with some Spanish variants, and includes a Tuscan recension whose witness is dated to *c.* 1343[79]), and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Filocolo* (*c.* 1338). The influence of the story remained strong in later years: a Spanish prose romance was widely read in the mid-16th century. The Italian versions inspired a dramatized *Vita* (of the type called "sacre rappresentazioni") of a fictitious "Santa Rosana", which offended the Church enough to include it in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* in 1661. John Keats's "The Eve of St Agnes" is another ripple as late as 1819.[80]

This convoluted net of associations has been debated since the 19th century. What we can be confident about is that all romance versions follow the same general story-line: an orphan Christian girl is raised by the Muslim royal couple of Spain together with their own son. The two children love each other, the king objects and tries to separate them by selling the girl as a slave. The hero finds her in a castle in Babylon, they are caught *in flagrante*, and put on trial. The local sultan decides to help them, they marry and return to Spain, he converts to Christianity and ascends to the throne.

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77 For an older comparison between the Italian and the Greek texts, see Schmitt, "La Thèsèide".

78 Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor*, pp. 20–36.

79 See Crescini, *Il cantare di Fiorio e Biancifiore*, p. 35.

80 Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor*, pp. 2–3.

And yet, despite the apparent uniformity, there are tonal variations which yield very different results in each version. The gamut ranges from secular romance, with a love story tinged with one suggestive account, to very upright religious epic. As was the case with medieval vernacular authors, all *Flores/ Floire* adapters felt unrestricted by generic limitations. Working within a uniform story line, they tweaked details, added or omitted episodes and recalibrated emphasis. The Spanish *Crónica* clearly refers to Spanish history, the tale was told as if it were history, and it was probably received as history: there are lengthy descriptions of the Moorish kingdoms set up in 711 CE when the Saracens held Spain. The *Crónica* pertains to the *chansons de geste*, such as the *Chanson de Roland*, the medieval epic genre which related the wars between Christians and Muslims over Al-Andalus.[81] In the older French version, the ring which the heroine gives her beloved is a purely magic object, whereas in the sixteenth-century Spanish prose it is part of Divine Providence, God's plan to restore order. In the trial scene of the English version the hero stands out as an individual who is conspicuously naive, while the scene in the *Crónica* reduces individuality, and is closer to a *Fürstenspiegel*, a *mirror for princes*, with the sultan deferring to his court which, in turn, makes political demands on their ruler. Boccaccio in *Filocolo* achieved a suspenseful build-up which contrasts sharply with the thinner descriptions of the trial in the majority of the other versions.[82]

Florios was written between the late 14th and the early 15th centuries.[83] Part of the charm it has for readers today lies in offering them the chance to appreciate how the Greek adapter created a voice for himself by manoeuvring within this European nexus of implications. If his exemplar was the Tuscan *Cantare di Fiorio e Biancifiore*, as has long been accepted, the Greek version reads like a free adaptation and certainly not a remotely faithful translation.[84] Although there are lines in the source which were rendered accurately, the adapter for the most part paraphrased the original 1,104 lines (138 *ottave rime*) into his 1,795.[85] He felt free to drop entire stanzas (for instance, st. 1, the address to the reader), or lines (the formulaic 50.2 "sì come conta 'l libro della storia"). On

81 See further Kinoshita, "In the Beginning was the Road.

82 For an overview of the versions, see Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor*, pp. 27, 76–7, 79–80, 82–3.

83 See Kriaras, *Βυζαντινὰ ἱπποτικὰ μυθιστορήματα*, p. 139.

84 For the derivation of *Florios* from the Tuscan *Cantare*, see Kriaras, *Βυζαντινὰ ἱπποτικὰ μυθιστορήματα*, p. 136 and, more recently, Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi bizantini*, p. 447.

85 Compare for example, 91.7, "in fuoco, nè in aqua, nè in bataglia" with l. 1177, «οὐδὲ εἰς ἱστίαν, οὐδὲ εἰς νερόν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἀπὸ ξίφος.» All quotations from the Tuscan text from Crescini (ed.), *Il cantare di Fiorio e Biancifiore*. An Edition of *Florios*, is in Cupane, *Romanzi*

other occasions, he expanded: for instance, Platziaflora's lament in slavery is much more amplified than Biancifiore's (compare ll. 991–1040 with st. 73). He tinkered with the pitch (the, uncalled-for, "la putana" [46.7], said of Biancifiore, was replaced with the seemly «ἡ κόρη», l. 632). The adapter indulged in expanding the sensuality of his source (compare ll. 787–854 with st. 58–61).

The major changes introduced in *Florios* cohere around three issues. One is the tension between the courtly and the demotic. *Florios* is a vernacular romance with a consciousness of the ethos of the feudal aristocracy as it had been represented in the great Western romances of chivalry of the twelfth century. It showed a sharp awareness of the knighted class and some of its duties (ll. 621–6, and 1382, «Καὶ ἂν εἶσαι καβαλλάριος ἐκ τῶν καβαλλαρίων»). It was conversant with the political demands on the feudal monarch to deliver justice (ll. 1675–7). It captured the civilised behaviour of a court to an outside challenger (ll. 609–15). It relished the portrayal of "a trial by combat" which was also a joust à *l'outrance* (to death), a standard chivalric theme (ll. 667–706).

It is interesting however that the *Florios* adapter rendered the esoteric high culture of the court by falling back on the demotic Greek tradition of his time. He used colloquialisms (l. 248), and employed expressions which eventually found their way to demotic poetry (see especially ll. 382–3 and 1006). Besides the vernacular language, he reverted to traditional Greek literary modes. An *ekphrasis physiognomiki*, a typified description originating in Byzantine rhetoric, described the heroine's mother, to which there is no analogue in the Italian text (ll. 5–9). The adapter thought up some of the most extravagant compounds in Medieval Greek (ll. 78, 79, 121, 191–4, 790). Instruction to young men as they leave home appears from Chrétien de Troyes and Malory to Shakespeare:[86] but it could be supposed that *Florios* was more directly influenced by the hortatory speeches in *Spaneas* (twelfth century)[87] or Marinos Falieros, *Logoi didaktikoi* (post-1421) when it spread out almost fivefold st. 90 of the *Cantare* (see ll. 1111–48).

The second difference introduced by *Florios* is that, unlike other European versions, including the *Cantare*, its adapter was not particularly interested in religion. True, the story is based on the sharp distinction between the good Christian parents of Platziaflora, and the horrible Muslim parents of Florios. It

cavallereschi bizantini, pp. 445–565, where the Italian and the Greek versions are thoroughly compared.

86 See Cooper, "Good Advice on Leaving Home in the Romances", pp. 101–21.

87 Constantinou, "Retelling the Tale", p. 237 offered the most recent comments on the connection between *Spaneas*, *Florios* and the tradition of advice to young people in Byzantine literature.

is also true that the romance opens by assimilating features from Saints' *Lives* (such as the genealogic preamble) and that Muslims are occasionally disparaged. But religion plays no vital part in *Florios*. The Muslim king did not object to Platziaflora's Christianity – in contrast to the Old French version. Florios did not convert before they married. His final conversion back in Spain is a trivial factor as far as the plot is concerned as opposed to the Spanish prose romance in which it was a condition for Blancaflor's acceptance of Flores's proposal.[88] Platziaflora did pray for the hero's safety when he prepared for battle (ll. 693–701) but her prayer has no religious warmth, and reads like a well-worn motif. As a matter of fact, the Greek adapter's primary intervention to the religion of the Tuscan source was to drop st. 82 in which the Muslim king could hardly have given his son a more unequivocal piece of his mind: you don't want that dead Christian, I will find you a nice Muslim girl.

Religious detachment removes *Florios* from the moralising, didactic, anti-Muslim religious epics, which were rife in the vernacular production of the later Middle Ages in Western Europe, and gives it a place nearer the genre of historical romance: it actually tells the story of a Moorish king in Spain who crossed over. After all, around the 14th century, History, which had given so much to Romance, was taking its due back, and the limits between the two were frequently blurred.

Readers of *Florios* continue to debate whether l. 1794, «εἰς πίστιν τὴν καθολικὴν Ῥωμαίων ὀρθοδόξων» (which adapted st. 138.5–6 "tornare / a la fede catolica e christiana") hints "Greek Orthodox" or "Catholic". The religious non-partisanship and the historical character of the romance would help explain that it was beyond the interests of the adapter to make too fine theological issues such as dogmatic nomenclature. He was telling a yarn about what he thought had been a real Moorish prince who had actually converted to Christianity in Spain. The adapter casually interpreted "fede" as «ὀρθοδόξων», which clearly meant until at least the 16th century, as it does not now, "the right faith, Christianity in general."[89] It did not matter to him to take the distinction any further.[90]

The third digression of *Florios* from its Western analogues is the fact that it invented a central hero that radically diverged from the type he was supposed to conform to. Although he is a fierce warrior, he is not quite a knight: his rage against royal authority quite disqualifies him (see ll. 732–3). Although he is undaunted by his father, and becomes Emperor of Rome (ll. 1795–1795b),

88 Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor*, p. 78.

89 Compare the rhymed *Imperios*, l. 724, where «ὀρθοδοξιά» has the same sense.

90 Kriaras, *Βυζαντινὰ ἱπποτικὰ μυθιστορήματα*, p. 138 took a similar position.

Florios remains low-key: he is not shown to excel at school, and stays completely silent at the trial that decides the couple's fate in Babylon.[91] One is tempted to consider the contribution of *Florios* to the development of individual characters in Greek romance, as its hero was moulded by the shifting palimpsest of Western backgrounds.

Imperios and Margarona[92]

By any standards, *Imperios and Margarona* was an extraordinary success. There exist today five manuscripts which carry the earlier, unrhymed version, and another whopping 16 printed editions with the rhymed variation which is based on the unrhymed version. These circulated from 1543 to at least 1806. In effect, *Imperios* was in demand for over 300 years.

The oldest manuscript (the one now kept in Naples) is positively dated to the 16th century, but its story has an older whiff, and could be conceivably assigned to the fifteenth. The striking compounds that emerged in the 12th century and were at their most exuberant in the 14th and 15th centuries seem settled in *Imperios*, and there are some typically medieval forms.[93] The adapter is not beyond serious mistakes, but can deliver an able line too as at 300, «τοῦτο ποθῶ, παρακαλῶ, βούλομαι, ἀγαπῶ το».

The idea is sometimes mooted that *Imperios* was composed in the Frankish Peloponnese. There are indeed modest indications of familiarity with some French vocabulary, but other linguistic evidence points further to the south, south-eastern Aegean (for example, N734 and 838, «χερνᾶ» for «γυρνᾶ»). The printed *rimada* appears to have some Cretan connections.

One of the reasons why the study of *Imperios* is fiercely interesting today is that it reflects the exceptional richness of late medieval literature in amalgamating various sources within the same work. The French romance *Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelone* is often quoted as the exemplar of *Imperios*. In truth, *Pierre* is the closest we have to an analogue. An Italian poem, namely

91 See l. 169: the young boy declares that he will obey his father *provided* that the command is fair. For the motif of an early conflict with the father as a sign of extraordinary capacities on the part of the child, see Yiavis, *Imperios*, comments on ll. 167–8.

92 All references and bibliography in this section are taken from Yiavis, *Imperios and Margarona*.

93 For examples of such compounds, see N33, «φεγγαροπρόσωπη, ἀγγελομουσουδάτη» and N81, «καμαροεγερμένα» [brows]. Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 93 correctly identified the career of the compounds. For one example of Byzantine morphology, see N591, «μαλίτζια».

variants of *Aretefila*, Sabadino degli Arienti's *Porretano* or, especially, *Ottinelo e Giulia*, all dated from 1480 until 1560, may as well have intervened at some stage.

In itself the archetypical *Pierre* is far from being a typically "static" text: scholarship nowadays accepts that the French romance must have absorbed elements from Jean Renart's *Escouffle* (written prior to 1202) and the anonymous German *Der Busant* (possibly antedating *Escouffle*). A large number of Italianisms in one central version of *Pierre* make one suspect an Italian origin, and one colophon line ("cette histoire écrite dans cette langue en l'an 1453") might suggest that it was translated into French, or, alternatively, that it was adapted from a French variant to another, and then translated into other languages.

To complicate matters, two key episodes – a bird snatching an amulet, and the hero concealing his treasure in barrels – are shared with one specific story in the *Arabian Nights*, and researchers sometimes thought that that was the ultimate source of *Pierre* and, consequently, *Imperios*. But in any other respect the two European texts could hardly be more different to the Arabic story. Rather, one is made aware of a surprisingly large amount of motifs shared among the Arabic, Persian and European traditions, which must have been in continuous exchange, and which eventually found their way to *Imperios*.

It is possible to ascertain the *modus operandi* of the Greek adapter. *Pierre* was stunningly popular. There were at least three hundred versions in all European languages, the story was engrossing: the fabulous young prince clashes with his father, leaves home, earns repute abroad, wins the unattainable lady, they separate, they meet again after adventures, and they reunite to become king and queen and live a long life together. The *Imperios* adapter must have been exposed to one variant or another, and many of the plot components must have inevitably rung familiar to his reading diet, Western and Eastern. Whatever his actual source, the adapter retained the story-frame (best recognizable to us in *Pierre*), into which he inserted dozens of Greek elements which came down to him either through reading or orally: there are echoes from Homer and ancient drama, *paraeneses*, Byzantine conventions, legends, snippets from folk poetry. The literary awareness of *Imperios* is far richer than *Pierre*'s.

All these ingredients were further augmented by the later rhymester, who, in addition, created a more prominent space for the heroine – a gesture that acknowledged the vastly greater number of women readers made possible by the massive production of the Venetian chapbooks.

Imperios in both its versions evolves a conceptual vocabulary which anticipates the transition from the medieval courtly proper to a more demotic

culture. *Pierre* was not a courtly romance, it was a composite romance, the genre which reset the aristocratic stories for broader audiences. It absorbed some courtly staples: the hero is galvanized by his love for the unapproachable lady whom he has never met, he earns praise in jousting, the princess insists that he prove his nobility before she accepts his love. Nevertheless, the concern of the anonymous French romancer was with firing up the imagination of readers who may never have had the chance to speak to a knight – not with articulating the values of courtly life.

Imperios continues this process of vernacularisation: all mannerisms of knighthood, which had been stilted in *Pierre*, were excised in the Greek versions. So were one risqué scene and the ubiquitous religious sentiment of the French analogue. (The demands on lovers and Christians are mutually problematized in courtly romances). *Imperios* also made its major characters more down-to-earth real: the hero is not a fledgling patrician warrior eager to prove his knightly prowess but a young man who thinks he is stifled by his father. The heroine is much less a princess and more a young woman in love.[94]

Far from being insular, the Greek adaptation is aligned with some central developments in European fiction. First, the tuck away from the courtly and towards the demotic is consistent with the stream of popular romances throughout Europe which were devoured in the sixteenth century by urban readers who reinvested the ancient figure of a mounted warrior, formerly an exclusive show of royal courts, with the symbolism of personal success.

Second, the exploration of the central character in *Imperios* strongly resembles a type of fictionalized Saints' *Lives* which were extremely fashionable in the later Middle Ages. The third nod is to the Italian novella and its development in the late 15th and early 16th centuries: *Imperios's* capacity to combine widely divergent material, and its brisk pace have an immediate parallel to that genre.

In the 18th century, *Imperios* was so omnipresent that the story was considered historically accurate. Kaisarios Dapontes (1713–84), a respectable poetaster, earnestly thought that the eponymous couple had founded Dafní, a renowned monastery outside Athens.[95] The obvious similarities with two folk tales collected in the 19th century (one in Athens, the other in Crete) attest that the rhymed *Imperios* became part of the folk tradition sometime between the 16th and the 18th centuries.

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94 On such non courtly features, see Yiavis, "So near, yet so far".

95 On this see Bees, *Der französisch-mittelgriechische Ritteroman*, pp. 51–69.

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PART 2

Ancient and New Heroes

CHAPTER 6

A Hero Without Borders: 1 Alexander the Great in Ancient, Byzantine and Modern Greek Tradition

Ulrich Moennig

Θεόν τε ἔχων συνεργὸν / with God's support

DIGENES AKRITES, G IV 30

Alexander the Great is one of the most famous figures of World Literature. His life and deeds instigated numerous works of narrative literature. In what follows I will deal with the Greek versions of the *Life of Alexander*, ancient, Byzantine and modern, the main focus lying on the Byzantine ones.

A Ancient Tradition

We know that the original *Life of Alexander* was composed in Alexandria.[1] Most scholars argue in favour of a date of composition in the 2nd/3rd century AD.[2] Obviously the episode of Alexander's extramarital conception from the former Egyptian Pharaoh Nectanabo served to legitimize the rule of the Ptolemaioi in pre-Roman Alexandria.[3] The *Life of Alexander* was composed on the basis of a number of sources.[4] For decades it was a concern of Classical philologists to reconstruct the Ancient Greek text, which is not preserved, from its medieval derivatives.[5] Their supposition was that a reconstruction of the *Life of Alexander* would provide information about versions concerning Alexander circulating in the Hellenistic centuries, inasmuch as the author of

1 Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*, p. 91.

2 For the oldest witness see Trumpf, "Pap. Berol. 21266".

3 Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*, p. 79.

4 Detailed analysis by Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*; a convenient conspectus provided in van Thiel, *Leben und Taten*, pp. XIII–XXIX.

5 A summary in van Thiel, *Leben und Taten*, pp. XXXVI–XXXIX.

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the *Life of Alexander* knew them and used them as sources for his own text.[6] These efforts culminated in Merkelbach's *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans* of 1954, while the second edition, to which Trumpf contributed substantially (1977), opened an avenue for focussing on the originality of the younger versions.

The best witness of the original text (recension α*) is referred to with the siglum A and is preserved in one single manuscript, the Parisinus graecus 1711.[7] The manuscript dates to the 11th century. While the *Life of Alexander* was considerably altered in the younger Greek (Byzantine) versions, evidence for elements of the original text is preserved in a number of translations, based either on recension α* (the translation of Iulius Valerius into Latin, Val.; a translation into Armenian, Arm.),[8] or on a now lost recension δ*, which served as a model for both a translation into Latin by Leo Archipresbyter (10th century)[9] and a Syriac text.[10] Three younger Greek versions of the *Life of Alexander* (which will be discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter) are believed to derive from manuscripts which go back—at least in certain parts—to the older tradition: a late-*Byzantine Alexander Poem* dating to the year 1388,[11] a late-Byzantine or post-Byzantine prose version partly preserved in an Oxonian manuscript (which is partly a translation into a register of Greek with elements of the vernacular)[12] and a 15th/16th century poem in rhymed vernacular verses (*Rimada*) which circulated in Venetian imprints from 1529 until the early 19th century, at least.[13]

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6 Important stages in this branch of classical scholarship were: Müller, *Ps.-Callisthenes*; Zacher, *Pseudocallisthenes*; Ausfeld, *Der griechische Alexanderroman*; studies by Pfister, e.g. *Eine jüdische Gründungsgeschichte Alexandrias*; Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*. The purpose of Stoneman in his numerous studies obviously lies in providing an easy access to "strange" texts rather than in shedding light on details, which might have remained unrevealed.

7 Kroll, *Historia Alexandri Magni*.

8 Iulius Valerius, *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis,* ed. Rosellini. Translation into French: Callu, *Roman d'Alexandre*. A translation of the Armenian text into English: Wolohojian, *The Romance of Alexander the Great*.

9 Pfister, *Der Alexanderroman des Archipresbyters Leo*.

10 Translation into English: Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great*; see the chapter by F. Doufikar Aerts in the present volume.

11 On its relation to the older tradition: Aerts, *The Byzantine Alexander Poem,* p. 26: "both a β-version and an A (a)-version".

12 On this manuscript see Holton, *The Tale of Alexander*, pp. 33–37.

13 "… the *Rimada* was more closely related to the α than to the β tradition, and probably dates back to a version intermediate between α and β which is closely related to the model of the Armenian translation", Holton, *The Tale of Alexander*, p. 37.

The *Life of Alexander* is traditionally referred to as "Pseudo-Callisthenes" or as *Alexander romance*. "Pseudo-Callisthenes" was established in the edition of a manuscript belonging to the younger recension β by Müller. Some manuscripts of this recension β name the ancient historian Callisthenes as the author of the *Life of Alexander*.[14] There is no study, to the best of my knowledge, of how the convenient, but misleading title *Alexander romance* came into being. I suppose that it was established with reference to western European tales about Alexander written in *romance* vernaculars such as the *Roman d'Alexandre* and that it denotes the vernacular style rather than the fictional mode of composition. Anyway, there are no hints within the texts about Alexander or comments of contemporary readers indicating that they were perceived as related to the genre of romances or even as fiction. In many of the Greek manuscripts, most of them dating to the Byzantine centuries, the generically relevant noun Βίος (i.e. "Life") appears. "Bios" was, needless to say, a genre which made use of fictional modes of writing without being perceived as fiction; it represents an earlier stage in the evolvement of biography.[15]

The structure of the original *Life of Alexander* was analysed by Merkelbach in his classic study; in numbering books and chapters Merkelbach follows the edition of Kroll. It becomes obvious that the author of recension α* perceived the world from a point of view south of the Mediterranean.[16]

According to Merkelbach's analysis (which is based on the editions of Greek texts in the tradition of Müller [1846]), the *Life of Alexander* is organized in three books. The difficulty in giving a summary lies both in the inconsistency of α* and in its defective transmission. The first of the three books starts from the story of how Nectanebo deceived Olympias and how Alexander was born [I 1–12]. Then follow: Alexander's *physis* and nurture [I 13]; the story of Nectanebo's death [I 14]; prophecies about Alexander's future reign and imperium [I 15]; Alexander and Aristotle [I 16]; the taming of Bucephalos [I 17]; Alexander's participation in the Olympic Games [I 18–19]; Philip repudiates Olympias and Alexander reconciles them [I 20–22]; first martial deeds [I 23]; Philip's death [I 24]; Alexander announces war against Persia [I 25]; departure from Macedonia and first hostilities [I 26–30]; Alexander builds Alexandria and stays for a while in Egypt [I 31–34]; Alexander heads northeast [I 35]; he receives a letter from Darius [I 36]; Alexander calms his troops [I 37]; Alexander writes a letter to Darius [I 38]; Darius writes letters to his satraps [I 39] and a second one to Alexander [I 40]; Alexander falls ill; battle of Issus [I 41]; letters

14 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, p. 288.

15 On the topic see Hägg, *The art of biography in antiquity*, pp. 1–9.

16 cf. Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*, p. 16.

[I 42 (a)]; movement towards Asia Minor [I 42 (b)]; movements in the north-east of the Mediterranean [I 43–44]; Alexander in Delphi [I 45]; Thebes [I 46–47]. The second book starts with a prophecy in Plataea [II 1] and ends with a prophecy about Alexander's early death [II 44]; it is the second book which deals with Alexander's great *praxeis* (deeds), which made him the world's sole emperor: Alexander writes a letter to the Athenians [II 1] and receives an answer [II 2]; mediation between Alexander and the Athenians by Demosthenes [II 3–4]; exchange of letters between Alexander and the Athenians [II 5]; Alexander and the Lacedaemonians [II 6]; again: battle of Issus [II 7]; Alexander and the physician Philippos [II 8]; Alexander crosses the Euphrates [II 9]; Alexander and a Persian dissident [II 10]; letter to the satraps in Asia Minor [II 11]; a letter of Darius to Porus [II 12]; Alexander's visit incognito to Darius [II 13–15]; preparation for a battle (Arbela) [II 16]; a letter of Darius to Alexander, the reaction of the Macedonians [II 17]; Alexander visits Persian graves [II 18]; letter of Darius to Porus [II 19]; Darius' defeat and death [II 20]; burial of Darius and punishment of his assassins [II 21]; Alexander makes preparations for leaving Persia [II 22]. The remaining part of the second book is quite unclear as to its original narrative content. In different versions of the *Life of Alexander* different letters are preserved, in which Alexander tells about his journey to the eastern end of the world; an analogous letter is missing from manuscript A and Iulius Valerius, but not from the Armenian translation. The third book starts from the battles in India and Alexander's victory over Porus [III 1–4]; then follow: Alexander's visit to the Gymnosophists [III 5–16]; Alexander's letter to Aristotle about a miraculous event in India [III 17, 1–8] and another letter about *mirabilia* of the east [III 17, 9–42]; the story about Candace, queen of Meroe, and Alexander's visit incognito to her [III 18–24]; Alexander's "encounter" with the Amazons [III 25–26 (a)]; an episode about difficulties in India [III 26 (b)]; Aristotle's letter to Alexander [III 26 (c)]; the return of the Macedonians to Babylon [III 26 (d)]; a letter of Alexander to Olympias about marvellous things in the east [III 27–28]; the narrative about Alexander's last days and death and the transfer of his dead body to Alexandria [III 30–34]; an epilogue [III 35].[17]

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17 Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*, pp. 108–55; Hägg attained to create narrative coherence giving a summary of α* in Hägg, *The art of biography*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 119–34.

B Byzantine Tradition

As Hägg states, biographies are "ephemeral"; often they are replaced by new ones, when circumstances change and a new need arises.[18] The *Life of Alexander* in the course of many centuries (more than a millennium) was translated and substantially reworked or even rewritten.[19] Which "needs" caused these processes? What lead to the result, that Alexander was continuously in the focus of interest, and which were the reasons, why the story of his life was retold again and again?

The *Life of Alexander* is an ancient text, but its reception is a Byzantine phenomenon—or, with respect to its wide distribution: a phenomenon of monotheistic medieval cultures.[20] This is related to the fact that there is reference to Alexander in the Old Testament and this at crucial points. This reference to Alexander in the Old Testament gains importance in parallel to the model of world history based, until the first coming of the Lord, on biblical sources. A major feature of this interpretation of history of the world was its "narrative organisation" in the scheme of a series of four empires—the empire of the Macedonians being the third and the fourth being the existing one (the Roman Empire). This scheme is based on the Book of Daniel; it functions as a major criterion in organizing the narrative material in the Byzantine world chronicles. Alexander and his Empire hold a constant position in the basic narrative of the world chronicles. The numerous, although not always explicit, intertextual references to the Book of Daniel prove that the *Life of Alexander* provided narrative content to a short prophetic passage in the Old Testament—a content which gave narrative support to the Byzantines' claim to Romanness. This is one "need".

Alexander conquered the whole world; according to the First Book of the Maccabees "[he] went through to the ends of the earth" (διῆλθεν ἕως ἄκρων τῆς γῆς). Thus, next to history, cosmography (based on a kind of Christian geography) became a major topic in the Byzantine versions of the story of Alexander's life. It is not by chance that Byzantine versions of the *Life of Alexander* and the *Life of Makarios the Roman* (actually the story about three monks who visit Makarios, who is living twenty miles' distance from the earthly Paradise) are related by intertextuality. This is a second "need".

It was part of the traditional imperial propaganda to compare emperors to Alexander. Alexander, especially in recensions ε and ζ* (on which see below,

18 Hägg, *The art of biography*, p. 2.

19 Ross, *Alexander historiatus*, may serve as an excellent guide to the widespread tradition.

20 See also the chapter by F. Doufikar-Aerts in the present volume pp. 190–209.

pp. 165–70), is presented as the ideal emperor. No specific Byzantine recension of the *Life of Alexander* or single manuscript, with the exception of the illustrated codex graecus 5 of the Venice Hellenic Institute, has ever been linked to a specific emperor, but still it is highly possible that courtly propaganda several times encouraged the dissemination of the text or of a single version. Anyhow, what made the ancient text compatible to the Christian Middle Ages are the idea of predestination, which is strongly present in the *Life of Alexander*, and that of *kosmokrator* ("Sole Emperor of the Universe"). Be that as it may, the Byzantine *Lives of Alexander* are original pieces of literature and they deserve to be studied as such.[21]

Whether the so-called recension β (ed. Bergson) dates to late Antiquity or to Byzantium is as open a question as when did Antiquity end and when did Byzantium begin.[22] Anyhow, it is clear that the author of β rewrote the *Life of Alexander* introducing a perspective on the world from north of the Mediterranean, a fact which becomes obvious from the way he describes Alexander's movements from Macedonia to the eastern end of the world. Jouanno diagnosed the following criteria for the rewriting: the author rewrote the text from a Greek perspective; he created a homogeneous and more reader-friendly text; he eliminated pagan elements or replaced them with Christian ones; he gave more emphasis to the encomiastic aspects of the *Life of Alexander* (this is in keeping with the Byzantine development of biography and with the use of Alexander in imperial rhetoric/propaganda); he corrected a number of historical deficiencies of his model) and he increased the number of miraculous elements.[23] From a Byzantine point of view, recension β is the most important text; it was highly influential, opening the way for the *Life of Alexander* to enter a Christian world, taking advantage of the story's compatibility with a Christian way of approaching the world and its history. Recension β is the version which is preserved in the highest number of Byzantine manuscripts. It served as a basis for new recensions, such as the late-Byzantine λ (which is not very well studied) and the middle-Byzantine ε (which might also be based on a version closer related to α*).

21 Scholars who studied the Byzantine *Lives of Alexander* as (Byzantine) texts in their own right are: Gleixner; Trumpf; Moennig; Jouanno; Aerts. A smaller number of monographs, which are relevant for Byzantine texts, approach the phenomenon of Alexander literature from the perspective of (early) Modern Greek studies: Veloudis; Holton, Moennig.

22 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, p. 247, accepts the dating to the 5th century.

23 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 247–303 (quotes: pp. 248, 249, 250, 251, 254, 258, 261, 265, 266).

According to Jouanno, recension λ is characterized by a lack of defined contours.[24] Obviously it was not a complete rewriting (that is why Helmut van Thiel edits only parts of the text in his dissertation and labels it a “sub-recension”), which took place some unspecified time after the early 8th century.[25] This has to do with the newly introduced episode about the “enclosure of the Unclean Nations Gog and Magog” by Alexander; the Unclean Nations go back to the Book of Ezekiel and became, through the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodios (of Syriac origin, Greek translation dating to the early 8th century),[26] an element within Byzantine eschatology: Gog and Magog will be freed on the arrival of the Antichrist. The fact that the episode evolved into a standard chapter in the Byzantine *Lives of Alexander* indicates that Alexander had become part of Byzantine eschatology.[27] Recension λ is, compared to β, enriched in various aspects: *apophthegmata* (sayings) are incorporated into the text, and details about the *aoiketos* (ἀοίκητος, the unexplored and uninhabitable parts of the world next to the earthly Paradise) are added: all these elements indicate the ongoing process of a narrative integration of Alexander into a Christian world.

Recension ε (ed. Trumpf) is the first *Life of Alexander* which is fully assimilated to the Byzantine, Christian perception of the world, its history, its geography and its rule accordingly to God’s will; ε is fully Christianized, its protagonist confesses his faith to the God of the Old Testament.[28] Compared to recensions α* and β it is fundamentally reorganized and does not preserve anything of the tripartite structure of the older recensions. The following summary serves to illustrate this:

Nectenabo (sic in ε) was very strong in astronomy; he foresaw his future defeat and left Egypt [1]. Nectenabo comes to Macedonia; he deceives Olympias and becomes Alexander’s father [2]. Alexander’s nature reveals his bright future from his early childhood [3]. The child Alexander tames Bucephalos [4]. Alexander gains victory in the Olympic Games in Rome [5]. While Alexander is absent, Philip leaves his wife Olympias; Alexander prevents him from marrying another woman and is crowned co-emperor [6]. Young Alexander defeats the Skythians [7]. Anaxarchos kills Philip in an attempt to abduct Olympias

24 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, p. 305; her analysis on pp. 305–38, including notes.

25 van Thiel, *Die Rezension λ des Pseudo-Kallisthenes*; van Thiel, *Leben und Taten*, p. XLVI; a new edition in preparation by Caterina Franchi.

26 See on this topic the chapter by F. Doufikar-Aerts in this volume.

27 On Byzantine eschatology see Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie*.

28 Basic bibliography on ε: Trumpf in Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*, p. 206–08; Moennig, *Die spätbyzantinische Rezension *ζ*, pp. 109–36; Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 339–440.

[8]. Alexander is crowned the new *basileus* of Macedonia [9]. Letters are exchanged between Alexander and Darius [10]. The Macedonians start their campaign towards the west; Alexander conquers Thessalonica [11]. Then, Alexander moves against Athens [12]. From Athens Alexander moves westwards and conquers Rome; he visits the (uninhabitable) western edge of the world and the Okeanos [13]. By ship he moves to the southeast of the Mediterranean; his generals and he himself found various cities which are named after them; in the Troad he visits the graves of Hector and Achilles [14]. From here, he starts his campaign against Darius; letters are exchanged; the Macedonians cross the Euphrates; Alexander orders the Macedonians to destroy the bridges; first battle between the Macedonians and the Persians [15]. Alexander visits Darius incognito [16]. Second battle between the Macedonians and the Persians [17]. Third battle between the Macedonians and the Persians; Darius flees and is assassinated by two of his generals [18]. Alexander sends a (first) report to Olympias and Aristotle [19]. Alexander moves towards Egypt and entering the land of the Jews he is impressed by their priests, who explain to him their religion; he promises the God of the Old Testament will also be his God [20]. Alexander falls ill and is cured by the physician Philippos [21]. Alexander arrives in Egypt, the home of his father Nectenabo. The Egyptians are told by god Apollon to submit to Alexander; they accept him as the legitimate successor of the last Pharaoh [22]. Alexander enters their capital and Nectenabo's palace, where he is crowned by the pharaoh's statue [23]. Alexander rebuilds the capital and names it Alexandria; there he rejects all pagan Gods and proclaims Monotheism; this sole God will be worshipped with the "Trisagion" [24]. Alexander moves towards the *aoiketos*, where he fights monsters and sees miraculous things; he crosses the river *ammorrous* (with flowing sand) [25]. Beyond this river of sand he comes to a place inhabited by small people [26]. In the *aoiketos*, he finds a column of Sesonchosis, who died at this very place [27]. The Macedonians, again, fight monsters [28]. Easter, Alexander finds columns reminiscent of Heracles and Semiramis [29]. Alexander meets the Gymnosophists [30]. Alexander visits the Island of the Blessed [31]. Alexander visits the Land of Darkness [32]. Alexander loses the source of immortality [33]. Alexander writes another report to Olympias and to Aristotle about his adventures [34]. The Macedonians start their campaign against India [35]. There is an exchange of letters between Alexander and Porus [36]. Alexander kills Porus in a duel [37]. There is an exchange of letters between Alexander and the Amazons [38]. In the North, Alexander encloses the Unclean Nations [39]. Alexander meets Candaules, the son of Candace; Candaules believes that he is meeting Antiochos [40]. Alexander alias Antiochos helps Candaules against Euagrides; Candaules

invites Alexander alias Antiochos to Candace's court [41]. On their way, Alexander enters the cave were the former Gods are waiting for the Last Judgment; Sesonchosis says: "it is given to you by Providence to see everything which is hidden" [42]. Alexander in Candace's palace; Candace reveals Alexander's real identity [43]. Alexander and the Macedonians after conquering the world prepare themselves for their way back to Macedonia; a servant poisons Alexander [44]. Alexander, dying, writes a last report to his mother [45]. Alexander divides his empire and dies; his dead body is transferred to Alexandria [46].

The date of composition is not absolutely secured. Trumpf, who discovered ε, formerly argued in favour of the early 8th century as a *terminus circa quem*, Jouanno argues that a date later than the 9th century is improbable.[29] In any case, Byzantium was established as the New Rome, Byzantine eschatology (as part of Byzantine imperial ideology) was obviously developed, and Alexander as the third *kosmokrator* was fully integrated into the Byzantine perception of history. The world Alexander conquers has two uninhabitable zones, both a western and an eastern *aoiketos*. In a prophetic episode the world is handed out to Alexander in the shape of a sphere (ε 23.2), while other episodes and the whole of the story of Alexander's exploration of the world evoke the picture of the world in the shape of a disc (e.g. ε 3.3). In the organization of the narrative material ε shows an affinity to the genre of saints' lives.[30] In the use of the topic of *iter ad paradisum* ε features similarities with the *Life of Makarios the Roman*.[31] Jouanno attests to the text's qualities of literariness.[32] A highlight in this middle-Byzantine *Life of Alexander* is the episode of Alexander's participation at the Olympic Games, which is presented as the thrilling story of a chariot horse race in the Constantinopolitan Hippodrome (chapter 5).[33] Alexander in this redaction is "designed" as an ideal, a model emperor (*kalos basileus*).[34] The fact that Alexander divides his empire into *four* is a clear reference to the revelations of the Book of Daniel, Chapters 7.6 and 8.6: "After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it"; "Then the male goat magnified {himself} exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the

29 Trumpf, *Vita Alexandri regis Macedonum*, p. xviii; Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, p. 339.

30 Trumpf in Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*, p. 207.

31 On the *Life of Makarios the Roman* see the recent article of Roilos, "Phantasia", pp. 19–23.

32 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 400–03.

33 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 361–65.

34 Gleixner, *Das Alexanderbild der Byzantiner*, pp. 94–96; Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 369–74, 374–77.

large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous {horns} toward the four winds of heaven".

There is no explicit evidence that this version is related to the dynasty of the Macedonians, which was founded by Basil I (867–886). Anyhow, it is a topic in Byzantine encomiastic writing that emperors, and especially emperors of the Macedonian dynasty, compared themselves or were compared to Alexander.[35] It might be by chance that Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (905–959) was one of those who reportedly expressed their veneration of Alexander.[36] It might also be by chance that there are passages in ε, which feature a resemblance to the book *De Ceremoniis*, a work transmitted under Constantine's name; the episode of Alexander's participation in the Olympic Games, actually in a chariot race in the Hippodrome of Constantinople, represents the same reality (in an almost cineastic mode of storytelling) of chariot races in the Hippodrome and of the four circus factions as the relevant chapter in the *De Ceremoniis* does.[37] And it might be by chance, that the *Vita Basilii* (probably not written by Constantine VII himself, but obviously he was involved in the composition of the work) makes use of similar *topoi* of biographical writing as the *Life of Alexander* does; a version of the *Life of Alexander* was one of the texts contained in the dossier Constantine VII had collected for the work on the *Vita Basilii*.[38] It is at the court of the Macedonian dynasty that "the old, formalist style of unbroken historical narrative was largely discarded in favour of historical biography"; in a somewhat unexpected way recension ε features similarities to what Markopoulos labels "new trends in Byzantine historical writing" and is related to the environment of Constantine VII.[39] To sum up, I would rather link (on the basis of speculation, admittedly) recension ε to the

35 Gleixner, *Das Alexanderbild der Byzantiner*, pp. 11–22 (the chapter "Alexander der Große als das Ideal des καλὸς βασιλεύς" is divided into the subchapters "Nachahmung Alexander durch byzantinische Kaiser" und "Alexander in der Topik der byzantinischen Kaiserreden").

36 Gleixner, *Das Alexanderbild der Byzantiner*, p. 14.

37 See Trumpf in Merkelbach/Trumpf, *Die Quellen*, p. 206, and the detailed analysis by Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 361–65. Important are Dagron's comments on the regarding the similarities between the *Life of Alexander* and the *De Ceremoniis* (Dagron, *L'hippodrome*, p. 23; p. 118 and note to p. 118 on p. 380).

38 Featherstone, "Basileios Nothos as Compiler", pp. 359, 360. Featherstone in an earlier publication ("Further Remarks on the *De Cerimoniis*", p. 115) assumed, that the version of the *Life of Alexander* might have been related to A (probably confusing A with δ*?); Dagron, *L'hippodrome*, p. 380, assumes this version might have been ε.

39 On biographical arrangement in middle Byzantine historiography, see Markopoulos, "From narrative historiography to historical biography"; the quote p. 699.

FIGURE 6.1 *Codex Oxoniensis Bodleian Barocci 17 (first half 13th century), Bodleian Library Oxford,* Alexander Romance, *fol.* 28^{V}*:* Alexander enters Rome. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD (<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/medieval/barocci/barocci.html> [last visit: March 17, 2015].).

dynasty of the Macedonians than to the Isaurian dynasty, as Jouanno does (also speculatively) (Figure 6.1).

Kalavrezou recently introduced new material into the discussion about the significance of Alexander in Byzantine imperial rhetoric. In the visual arts the motif of Alexander's marvellous flight "inspired one of the most lasting and impressive compositions ever created in Byzantium". In the present context I would like to highlight two of the compositions she analyses; they can be paralleled with developments in the *Life of Alexander*, which are more visible in ε than in earlier versions: (a) "a pair of small enamel roundels now on the lower border of the Pala d'Oro in San Marco in Venice. The first roundel depicts a circle representing the earth … surrounded by two intertwined snakes … On the second roundel, in a visually very abstracted and abbreviated language we can recognize the representation of Alexander's flight". And (b) "[o]ne of the earliest mid-Byzantine visual associations of the flight of Alexander and Byzantine imperial imagery can be seen on a lead seal of the 10th century from Constantinople… On one of its sides is the image of the flight, on the reverse it depicts Constantine and Helena". The roundel (a) represents the whole of the earth; the author of ε introduced Alexander's visit to the western edge of the world, because he wanted Alexander to have conquered the whole of the earth; the lead seal (b) represents *en miniature* what the author of ε brought into an extensive narrative: the story of Alexander's conquest represents the Byzantine imperial claim to rule over the whole of the inhabited world and his conversion to the God of the Old Testament anticipates Constantine's conversion to Christianity—which implied the Byzantine claim that their reign was given by the grace of God.[40]

Recension γ (ed. Lauenstein, Engelmann, Parthe) is a compilation of β and ε; there is no convincing proposal for a date of composition.[41] Before Trumpf discovered ε, episodes of ε were only known through γ. Jouanno states in γ a lack of creative ability; with reference to an interpolation from Palladius she suggests that the compiler had the intention to deliver a comprehensive version of Alexander's biography; she refers to his method as a technique of patchwork and montage.[42] The organized narrative order in ε is destroyed in favour of an expanded text, which contains a number of doublets, sometimes even contradictory. Still, after a careful analysis Jouanno recognizes judgment, scruples of a Christian author and care in compilation.[43] An especially inter-

40 Kalavrezou, "The Marvelous Flight of Alexander"; the quotes on pp. 105–07.

41 cf. Jouanno, *Histoire merveilleuse*, p. 26.

42 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 441, 443, 444, 446.

43 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 442–55.

esting, richly illustrated manuscript of recension γ is preserved in the collection of the Hellenic Institute in Venice (see below).

The youngest Byzantine (radical) reworking as to narrative organisation is the recension ζ*—the asterisk indicates that it is not preserved. What is preserved is a translation into Slavonic[44] and a re-translation into vernacular Greek (ζ′),[45] which circulated widely among the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire and beyond, from 1750 in printed books (I will come back to this topic below).[46] Something in the version, obviously, addressed Orthodox readers in particular, given that the circulation of this version in different translations coincides with the part of the world, which was Christian in the Middle Ages, but not Roman Catholic.[47]

Recension ζ* was based on ε (surprisingly enough, because ε is preserved in only one manuscript and one would consider it aberrant) and is very much enriched with fantastic details. Unlike γ, which is also enlarged, coherence was a major concern of the author of ζ*.[48] ζ* is the high point within the process of Byzantinization of the *Life of Alexander*. Its author made use of a considerable variety of texts somehow related to Alexander: other recensions of the *Life of Alexander*, including a Latin one, episodes taken from various sources, probably mediated through Byzantine chronicles, a collection of *apophthegmata*,[49] the *Life of Makarios the Roman* and chapter 8.3–7 of the Book of Daniel. In some of its features, ζ* resembles the romances of love, which were produced at the same time or some earlier (13th–14th centuries) in Constantinople. In 14th-century fiction, the motif of *iter ad paradisum* was popular in romances (*Velthandros and Chrysantza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*) and evolved into a

44 Marinković, *Srpska aleksandrida*; a convenient edition with a German translation: Christians, *Die serbische Alexandreis*.

45 There is no adequate edition; for the time being, the text is accessible through: Lolos, Konstantinopulos, *Zwei mittelgriechische Prosa-Fassungen*; *Zwei mittelgriechische Prosa-Fassungen*.

46 Edition of the Modern Greek "chapbook": Beludes, Διήγησις Αλεξάνδρου. The text, which circulated in print was a product of constant reworking of the vernacular re-translation; on this process see Moennig, *Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte* and below, p. 38.

47 There are translations into: Slavonic, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Russian, Belo-Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Arabic.

48 Analyses of ζ*: Moennig, *Die spätbyzantinische Rezension *ζ*; Jouanno, "Réécritures"; Jouanno, "Mutations grecques tardives"; Jouanno, "Voyages".

49 Such collections are preserved in manuscripts; see e.g. codex Mosquensis mus. hist. gr. 436. On this codex see Karla, *Vita Aesopi*, pp. 26–29; see also her chapter in the present volume pp. 330–31. For a sample, see L. Sternbach, *Gnomologium Vaticanum Gnomologium Vaticanum e Codice Vaticano Graeco 743* (Texte und Kommentare, 2), Berlin 1963 .

theme of two works *sui generis*, related to the genre of romance (*Consolatory Fable about Bad and Good Fortune*, Meliteniotes' *Verses on Chastity*)[50]; Alexander's journey to the earthly Paradise covers approximately one-sixth of the whole text. There is a very concrete reference to Drama, a town in eastern Macedonia, which tells us something about the place of composition of ζ*. The author also seems to have been acquainted with a number of "sports" which might have been imported from Western Europe to Constantinople. If ζ* was written in favour of an emperor or a pretender, there is hardly any second suspect but the young Andronikos, the later emperor Andronikos III, who defeated Andronikos II in 1328. In 1992 I argued, that ζ* might have been composed in the middle or the third quarter of the 14th century.[51] Given that in the meantime earlier dates for the Palaiologan romances have been accepted, one might ask if ζ* could have been written in the 1320s by someone of Andronikos' entourage. This would explain the familiarity with the topography of today's Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, given that this area was a place of activities of the young Andronikos before he expelled his grandfather from the throne in Constantinople. There is even a point of comparison between the (fictional and fantastic) journeys of Kallimachos and Velthandros to the earthly Paradise and Alexander's journey to the eastern end of the world: the princes Kallimachos and Velthandros (who probably were admired at the court of Andronikos II) withdrew themselves from the challenges of reality, while Alexander, a leader by nature, with whom the young Andronikos compared himself,[52] faced the opportunities of the world more than anybody else ever did in history. It is as if the author of ζ* (using methods of fictional writing in a biography of an historical person) accuses the regime of the elder Andronikos of fleeing from reality into fiction.

ζ* is a most interesting piece of late-Byzantine literature, which reveals a lot about Byzantine perceptions of the world and its history. The eschatological relevance of Alexander in ζ* becomes more obvious than in any other Byzantine recension: Alexander receives, in Rome, prophecies about his reign derived from the Book of Daniel, and from the moment of his entrance into Jerusalem,

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50 All titles in English are taken from: Agapitos et al., "Genre, structure and poetics", pp. 13–14; for more information on these texts see the chapter "In the Realm of Eros" by C. Cupane in the present volume; on motifs of *katabasis* (including *iter ad paradisum*) in late-Byzantine romances see Moennig, "Literary Genres and Mixture of Generic Features".

51 Moennig, *Die spätbyzantinische Rezension *ζ*, pp. 142–52; see also Jouanno, "Roi de guerre", p. 1208.

52 Gleixner, *Das Alexanderbild der Byzantiner*, p. 15.

the Prophet Jeremiah appears in Alexander's dream to reveal things that will happen in the emperor's life.

In my monograph on ζ* I divided the text—on the bare basis of analysis—into six parts: part I tells about the extramarital conception until Alexander's coronation; II tells about the conquering of the West and the South; III tells the story about Alexander's victory over the Persians; IV tells about Alexander's journey to the eastern end of the world and to the earthly Paradise; V tells about the conquest of India and the northeast of the world; part VI delivers impressions about the period of peace and tells about Alexander's death.

After a *Prooimion* which includes a survey about the "geopolitical" situation in the year 5000 (the number indicates chiliastic notions), ζ* starts from the story about Nectenabo's (sic) defeat and flight from Egypt to Philippi in Macedonia, where he establishes himself as a sorcerer. Olympias and her husband, Philip, are in despair about not having a child and heir; that is why Olympias contacts Nectenabo; Nectenabo deceives Olympias. When Alexander is born, there are prodigious signs. Alexander absorbs his school curriculum in very short time and is very much addicted to all kinds of sports. Alexander kills Nectenabo; Nectenabo is conscious that he is condemned to hell after his death. An aetiological myth about the city of Drama is interwoven into the story about the taming of Bucephalos. Alexander takes part in the Olympic Games, a Hellenic (i.e. pagan) custom which, however, reminds one of a tournament. After his return home, Alexander reunites his parents and defeats an attack from the Cumans. When Philip dies after an injury, Alexander is crowned the new king of Macedonia; Alexander and his friends hold a council. Letters are exchanged with Darius, who heard that Philip had died. In another letter, Darius teases Alexander. Alexander's first actions lead him from Philippi (south-) westwards; destinations are Thessalonica, Athens and Rome. Alexander's entrance into Rome and reception by the Romans is proleptic for Alexander's future development: Alexander is given marvellous gifts, many of them related to the world's history (precious things that once belonged to Nebuchadnezzar, Solomon, "Queen" Sibylla, Paris, Ajax, Tarquinius). In Apollo's sanctuary, he receives a prophecy based on chapter 8 of the Book of Daniel referring to the "two-horned ram". Leaving Rome, Alexander moves to the western *aoiketos*, where he reaches the outlet of the "sea" (obviously the Mediterranean) into the "river" Okeanos. From the western end of the world, Alexander moves to the eastern Mediterranean by ship. His friends and he himself found various cities; one of them, Byzas, founds Byzantium,[53] while Philon and Ptolemaios conquer the Barbary Coast. In Phrygia, Alexander visits

53 See also Jouanno, "Roi de guerre", p. 1218–20.

the tomb of Achilles; he is touched when he hears about Polyxene's love for Achilles. In Troy, Alexander is given marvellous objects, which formerly belonged to persons of world history. Alexander now visits Macedonia, from where he moves eastwards, in order to face the Persians. Alexander's troops are reorganized. Again, letters with Darius are exchanged. The episode of Alexander's entrance into Jerusalem is closely related to the one of his entrance into Rome. Thanks to Jeremiah, Jerusalem surrenders to Alexander; Jeremiah is informed about the prophecy Alexander had received in Rome. Jeremiah invites Alexander to enter Jerusalem, appearing in his dream. It is Jeremiah who encourages Alexander to profess faith in the God of the Old Testament; with the support of God Sabaoth he will defeat the Persians. Alexander receives marvellous gifts, which resemble those he had received in Rome and Troy. Alexander now conquers Egypt. He destroys and rebuilds the "city" (i.e. Alexandria). There is a supernatural coronation; Alexander builds four columns to represent the Macedonian rule (the number four recalling the revelations of Daniel). Alexander now meets Darius. The distance from Egypt to the Euphrates seems to be very short; this is obviously the product of a confusion caused by the homonymy of the Egyptian Babylon (i.e. Cairo) and the Mesopotamian one. The battle takes place in the field of Shinar, where the Tower of Babel had been built. Another battle takes place; Alexander now crosses the river Euphrates and conquers the city of Babylon, another centre of world history (the capital of the first of the four Empires); again he is presented with numerous gifts related to world history. Darius sends an assassin who fails to kill Alexander, which demoralises Darius even more. What follows next is the scene of Alexander's visit incognito to Darius (on Jeremiah's advice). Darius on this occasion loses what was left of his former self-confidence. He is defeated in a battle and flees, wounded by two assassins. Alexander is now crowned the new king of Persia (the crown formerly belonged to Salomon). On the same occasion, he marries Roxane. Alexander punishes Darius' assassins; Alexander and Roxane fall in love with each other. Alexander in a letter addressed to Olympias and Aristotle writes that thanks to the God Sabaoth he is now the highest among all kings. Before leaving Persia (eastbound) he declares faith in the God Sabaoth to be the religion of his kingdom. Alexander is confident that with the help of the God Sabaoth the pagan idols, "the gods of the Hellenes", will be expelled and condemned. From Persia, Alexander moves eastwards into the *aoiketos*. There he experiences various marvellous things, meets creatures with unusual features and fights numerous monsters. He finds columns, which mark the spots where his predecessors (who also claimed to be the world's sole emperor) had previously reached and regarded as the eastern end of the world. Alexander meets the Gymnosophists, who escaped from the

sinful world and live their lives next to Paradise. The Blessed, who live even closer to Paradise, are descendants of Seth, Adam and Eve's third's son; Alexander expected to meet the Gods of the Hellenes on the Fortunate Islands, but he was told that the God Sabaoth had sentenced them to Hades, where they wait for the Second Coming of the Lord. Before reaching the Isles of the Blessed, Alexander visits the places of eternal punishment. The Blessed inform him that he cannot visit the earthly Paradise, because entrance is prohibited to living beings by a wall and Seraphim; in order to find their way back into the inhabited world, Alexander and the Macedonians are given advice to follow the four rivers of Paradise downstream. Then, Alexander enters the Land of Darkness (which is full of precious stones and metals) and finds a spring that restores to life a dried fish. Again, the Macedonians experience marvellous things and meet strange creatures. There are prophecies about Alexander's early death. When the Macedonians re-enter the inhabited world, letters are exchanged between Porus, king of India, and Alexander. Alexander writes a letter to Olympias and Aristotle and tells them about his experiences at the eastern end of the world. Now the Macedonians move against Porus. Three battles take place. Philon visits Porus as an ambassador. Finally, the Indians and the Macedonians agree that the battle will be decided in a duel between Porus and Alexander. This duel takes place, and Alexander kills Porus. Alexander's entrance into the capital of India is narrated; there is also a detailed description about the marvellous decoration of the palace. Now letters are exchanged with the Amazons; finally, the Amazons submit themselves. Thereafter, Alexander fights the Bersils. In the high North, he encloses the Unclean Nations. What follows next is the episode about Candace, the queen of Amastris. Alexander visits Candace incognito. On his way to her palace, Alexander enters the place where the Gods of the Hellenes wait for the Second Coming of the Lord in the year 7000 and the Last Judgment; they are conscious that they will be condemned to eternal punishment. This place is the Hades. Alexander meets among others Darius and Porus. Arriving at Candace's palace, Candace reveals Alexander's real identity. There is an incident with Doreph, one of Candace's sons, who wants to kill Alexander. When Alexander leaves Candace's place, he is awarded numerous marvellous gifts. Now that Alexander has conquered the whole world, he decides to divide his empire. He moves to Persia, where he meets Roxane. Jeremiah appears in a vision and informs Alexander about his coming death; he also informs him about the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment. Aristotle arrives from Macedonia to meet Alexander and Roxane. The whole part of the text is characterized by a series of episodes, which indicate a situation of lasting peace. Aristotle leaves for Macedonia and Olympias arrives in Babylon. Two of the Macedonians want to

go back to Macedonia and visit their mother; but Alexander keeps them next to him. Their mother sends poison from Macedonia. Bad news arrive from Jerusalem: Jeremiah has died; his dead body is buried in Alexandria to keep away snakes. More episodes are told about Alexander's peaceful reign. Vrionus decides to poison Alexander; his motive is avarice. In the remaining hours of his life, Alexander gives last orders about his heritage. The last farewell from Roxane, from Bucephalos and from his friends are scenes of overwhelming grief. Bucephalos kills Alexander's assassin. Alexander dies in the Land of Goshen, the place given by the Pharaoh to the Hebrews of Joseph, next to the river Nile (again the author of ζ* confuses the two Babylons, the Mesopotamian and the Egyptian). Roxane commits suicide over the dead body of Alexander. Alexander and Roxane are buried in Alexandria. Alexander's empire is separated into many parts.

Much more than any other recension of the *Life of Alexander* ζ* can be read as if it were an apocryphal story to give content to the biblical "[he] went through to the ends of the earth".[54] Some places Alexander visited were places of importance in the Old Testament. Alexander also conquered all centres of world empires (plus Jerusalem), including the one, which was to succeed the Empire of the Macedonians: Rome. It is noteworthy that in this late-Byzantine recension Alexander is declared *kosmokrator* in the city of (Old) Rome; this element of the story seems to be a strong indicator that the author of ζ* belonged to an anti-Latin (or anti-papal) party, which claimed Romanness for Byzantium. Byzantium, "incidentally", was founded by one of Alexander's friends, Byzas, which is just another element that indicates the political (both propagandistic and populist) aspect of this recension.

There is hardly any doubt that the concept of recensions, established by Classicists, is appropriate to describe the Byzantine "metamorphoses" of the *Life of Alexander*. The recensions are a product of conscious reworking of older texts, and the criteria for this reworking usually are recognisable. Still, hardly any manuscript transmits the proper text of any recension; compilation of different recensions or various "individualisations" are the rule rather than the exception. Given that a number of the extant Alexander manuscripts date to the 14th or 15th century, we realise that the (small) late-Byzantine society perceived the *Life of Alexander* in a remarkable variety of ways (Figure 6.2).

Codex no 5 of Hellenic Institute in Venice (one of the manuscripts which reproduce recension γ) is especially important, because its luxurious illustrations provide us with visualized proof about the function of versions of the *Life of Alexander* in imperial rhetoric. Its text is derived from a different (although

54 See above, p. 163.

FIGURE 6.2 *Codex 5 of the Hellenic Institute* (*2nd half 14th century*), *Hellenic InstituteVenice,* Alexander Romance, *fol. 21^{v}: Alexander takes part at the Olympic games in Rome.*
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE HELLENIC INSTITUTE, VENICE.

related, via ε) branch of the Byzantine *Lives of Alexander*; but especially its illustration reflects an imperial ideology, which comes quite close to that expressed in ζ*. According to Trahoulias's study, the codex was commissioned by the Trapezuntine emperor Alexios III Komnenos (*1338, emperor from 1349 to 1390), who reportedly "emulated Alexander".[55] What is new with this codex within the Byzantine tradition of *Lives of Alexander* is that it leads us away from Constantinople to one of the emerging centres of power in the Greek-speaking world. Interestingly enough, the Trapezuntine Komnenoi chose texts on Alexander to support their claim (obviously with reference to the Roman heritage of Byzantium), while John Orsini of the Despotate of Epiros (who claimed to be a Komnenian) preferred to commission the production of an *Iliad* by a certain Constantine Hermoniakos (presumably for a similar purpose).[56]

It is remarkable that the *Byzantine Alexander Poem*, which chronologically follows the highly Christianized narratives of both recension ζ* (1320s?) and the Trapezuntine manuscript (1350s?), go counter to the evolution of the previous (Byzantine) millennium. One wonders if this re-conversion of Alexander into an historical hero of Antiquity should be considered as a product of "Latinisation" of the *Life of Alexander*, given that the Latin tradition went back to versions of the *Life of Alexander* more closely related to recension α*.[57] Anyhow, not only the *Byzantine Alexander Poem* of 1388 goes back to the earlier versions of the *Life of Alexander*, but also single manuscripts, as e.g. the codex Leidensis Vulcanianus 93 (copied by Gerardos of Patras, who worked in the environment of Vittorino da Feltre; recorded manuscripts date to the years 1420 through 1443)[58] and the codex Oxoniensis Bodleianus misc. 283 (copied in 1516 and later owned by "a certain Cyril, metropolitan of Grevena, from Chios", as is denoted in a statement of ownership in both Greek and Italian, the latter adding the name of a certain Giustiniani; this manuscript is related to

55 Trahoulias, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, p. 31–35.

56 Beck, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur*, pp. 167–69. On Hermoniakos, see the chapter by R. Lavagnini in this volume pp. 239–40.

57 See also Jouanno, "Roi de guerre", p. 1221.

58 Usually referred to as L (edition: van Thiel, *Leben und Taten*; analysis: Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, pp. 271–80). On the scribe, Girardos/Gerardos of Patras or Methone, see: Gamillscheg/Harlfinger, *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800–1600*, p. 65. Especially on the Vulcanianus 93 see Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy*, p. 39: "[a]mong the known or potential patrons of Girard in Italy there is no one who seems likely to have commissioned such a strange medley of texts and one wonders if it goes back to his years in Greece".

the model of the early Modern Greek *Tale of Alexander* or *Rimada*)[59] confirm and continue this trend towards a re-conversion of Alexander, which is documented for the first time in the *Byzantine Alexander Poem.*

The *Byzantine Alexander Poem* (ed. Aerts) was composed in 1388 and is preserved in codex Marcianus graecus 408, which once belonged to Cardinal Bessarion);[60] the *Poem* is a reworking of its model both in style (it is written in 6130 verses) and in narrative composition. It presents a more "historicising" image of the world and of its history than any other Byzantine recension or version of the *Life of Alexander* does.[61] The question I alluded to in the previous paragraph—whether the *Byzantine Alexander Poem* is pro-Latin or anti-Latin (or neutral)—gains importance in comparison to another text preserved in the same codex. The declared subject of this other text is the Latin Conquest of Constantinople in 1204 and the "Roman" "Reconquista" in 1261; its actual subject, though, is the development of the relationship between the Romans (i.e. Byzantines) and the Latins (Roman Catholics) in the later 13th century, the Second Council of Lyon 1272–1274, and the restoration of Orthodoxy by Andronikos II after 1282.[62] The text about Romans and Latins—a text with a strong anti-Latin attitude and a preference for Andronikos II (compared to his father Michael VIII)—in the Venetian codex reveals a good deal of historical thinking in modern terms. There is, e.g., a reference to a Hellenic site (in verse 474, ed. Matzoukis); the Hellenes, obviously, according to the terminology of the anonymous author, were the inhabitants of Byzantium before the Roman Emperor Constantine rebuilt (and christianized) the city,[63] and the education of the (Byzantine) Romans is Hellenic. The *Byzantine Alexander Poem* is positive in that the Hellenes were defeated by Alexander and then became part of his people; none other than Demosthenes in his speech to the Athenians awards the ethnonym "Hellene" to the Macedonian aggressor (verse 2750, ed. Aerts). Given that the Byzantines considered themselves Romans and as such heirs to Alexander, the *Byzantine Alexander Poem* tells a (sub-) story about the incorporation and assimilation of the Hellenes into the scheme of Byzantine

59 On this manuscript (which belongs into a series of manuscripts in vernacular Greek which form a collection) Jeffreys, "The Oxford Manuscripts Auct. T. 5. 20–25"; the quote p. 154).

60 Evidence provided by Trumpf, "Zwei Zitate". See also Matzukis, "Observations"; Matzukis, "The Alexander Romance", and Aerts, *The Byzantine Alexander Poem*, pp. 6–9.

61 Analyses: Jouanno, "Réécritures"; Jouanno, "Mutation grecques tardives"; Jouanno, "Voyages"; Jouanno, "Roi de guerre".

62 Matzukis, *The Fall of Constantinople*.

63 Matzukis, "The Alexander Romance", interprets the verse as referring to the inhabitants of Constantinople of the 13th–14th century.

imperial ideology; the Byzantine Empire, thus, contains Hellenism, but is much more than (only) that.[64] But still, the *Byzantine Alexander Poem* refers to the revelations of Daniel and thus features, despite its debts to the more conservative tradition, elements of Christianization. There are explicit references to the Book of Daniel in verses 5, 1661, 1670 and 6058 (ed. Aerts). These allusions support my view that the *Byzantine Alexander Poem* was rather a pro-Byzantine text than a pro-Latin one.[65] Jouanno's analysis—she focuses on "interpolations" from the *Chronicle* of George the Monk and recognizes the existence of two contradicting personages of the protagonist—is in keeping with my reading.[66] The *Byzantine Alexander Poem* might have been composed in order to support a pretender to the succession of John V Palaiologos; this person was probably aware of the fact that one day he might be forced to agree to the union of the churches, although he was anything but in favour of this option.

C Modern Greek Tradition

The so-called *Rimada*, a poem in rhymed vernacular verses and "officially" titled *Tale of Alexander*, was first published in Venice in 1529.[67] The editor, Dimitrios Zinos, provides us with some information about the text. The author lived in Zakynthos and did not respond to Zinos's request to provide him with a better manuscript. By that time, Zakynthos had not been Byzantine for three hundred years and more. The *Rimada*, thus, is the only text about Alexander discussed in this chapter, which leads us with certainty to a part of the Greek-speaking world under Roman Catholic domination. In keeping with this is the complete re-paganisation of the *Life of Alexander*, which is a product of the Italian Renaissance—or, more precisely, of an echo of the Renaissance taking place in Italian city states. The *Rimada* is not the only text within the series of early Modern Greek secular books, printed for the first time in the 1520s or 1530s, which echoes the approach of the Renaissance to pagan Greek

64 The Byzantine claim to Romanness is crucial for understanding the narrative treatment of pre-Byzantine history by the Byzantines; the standard work on Byzantine Romanness is Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*; the main arguments are further substantially developed in Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic.*

65 Especially to Dan. 7.6: "like a leopard", see above, p. 8.

66 Jouanno, "Réécritures", 9.

67 Holton, The *Tale of Alexander*; Jouanno, "Réécritures"; Jouanno, "Mutations grecques tardives"; Jouanno, "Voyages"; Jouanno, "Roi de guerre".

FIGURE 6.3 *Woodcut from the Venetian edition (1529) of the* Alexander Romance*: Horse-race in Morea (i.e. at the Olympic Games) between Alexander and Nikolaos.*

Antiquity,[68] an approach completely unknown from Byzantine narratives, as far as they are related to themes of Greek Antiquity (let alone the Byzantine chronicles) (Figure 6.3).[69]

It is an odd coincidence that the early Modern Greek reception of the *Life of Alexander* was dominated by two forms (both in vernacular Greek), the one derived from α* and both pagan and "antiquated" and the other derived from ζ* and strongly christianized. The Trapezuntine manuscript owned by the Hellenic Institute in Venice might provide a hint towards an explanation of the phenomenon. Dimitris Kastritsis has analysed the Ottoman captions of the codex. According to Kastritsis, these captions add a second layer to the text of these manuscripts, which refers to the illustrations rather than to the Greek text. This second layer reveals some kind of Ottoman adaptation of Byzantine Imperial ideology, something, which fits the Sultan Mehmed II.[70]

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68 Such texts are: *Ομήρου Ιλιάς μεταβληθείσα πάλαι εις κοινήν γλώσσαν* (1526) [*Iliad, translated into common speech*]; *Ο Αλέξανδρος ο Μακεδών* (1529) [*Alexander the Macedonian*]; Θησέος και γάμοι της Εμηλίας (1529) [*Theseus' and the wedding of Emilia*]; Βατραχομυομαχία (1539) [*Battle of Frogs and Mice*]; Γαδάρου, λύκου Κιαλουπούς διήγησις ωραία (1539) [*Tale of the Donkey, the Wolf, and the Fox*]. Numbers in brackets denote the year of the first edition.

69 On this topic see Jeffreys, "The Attitudes of Byzantine Chroniclers".

70 Kastritsis, "The Trebizond Alexander Romance". Kastritsis unfortunately did not take into account the studies by Bellingeri, "Il «Romanzo d'Alessandro» dell'Istituto Ellenico" and "Nuove note turche".

A kind of translation of Byzantine Imperialism and of the claim to Romanness into the Ottoman Empire might have provided the ideological background also for the re-translation of ζ* from Slavonic into vernacular Greek (ζ′).

We cannot judge if the *Rimada* or ζ′ was read more—which of the two was, so to say, more successful. One would think that a printed book reaches more readers (or a broader audience) than a number of manuscripts. ζ′ is preserved in a comparatively large number of manuscripts[71]; the earliest date to the early 16th century and are written in an hazardous Greek, which was faulty from the outset (due to errors which occurred during the translation from a Slavonic model).[72] ζ′ was subsequently reworded and reworked (what indicates a constant interest in this text), until it was printed in Venice in 1750 and became a best-seller (usually referred to as *Phyllada* [= chapbook]).[73] What we know is, that in some manuscripts of ζ′ there are interpolations from the *Rimada*. One of these manuscripts is the newly discovered and important codex Q 732 of the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek Weimar, which according to Dominic Mertzanis and Claudia Sode, on the basis of watermarks, dates to the second half of the 16th century and which, in the 18th century at least, was in Constantinople.[74] It might be an accident that for the decade of the 1570s (approximately) we are well informed about the activities of a copyist who was also an author of texts and who used to reword the texts he copied (including his own ones); this copyist is Manouil Malaxos. A revision of this text would fit perfectly into what we know about Manouil Malaxos's activities in Constantinople at the Patriarchate. Especially in its eschatology and in its claim for the subjects of the Ottoman Sultan to be the Romans and, thus, the heirs to God's Champion, this version of the *Life of Alexander* fits perfectly with the interest in world chronicles, which was obviously very lively in the Ottoman 16th and 17th centuries and more precisely in the *Chronicle of 1570*, which is an

71 See Moennig, *Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte* und Moennig, *Die spätbyzantinische Rezension *ζ*, pp. 42–45 (14 manuscripts); since 1992 three more manuscripts or fragments have become known: Parasoglu, "Codex Yalensis 294"; Codex 89 of the Μονή Ευαγγελισμού on the island of Sciathos (Antonios, former Metropolitan of Eleia, Κατάλογος χειρογράφων", p. 609); Codex Q 732 of the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek Weimar (Mertzanis/Sode, "Die unbekannten griechischen Handschriften", pp. 131–32).

72 Edition of the most complete manuscripts: Lolos, Konstantinopoulos, *Zwei mittelgriechische Prosa-Fassungen*.

73 See above, p. 8. There are indications, but no positive proof of a first edition of the (or a) prose text before 1682 and another edition in 1699; see Moennig, "Neograeca Fabriciana", pp. 521–22.

74 Mertzanis/Sode, "Die unbekannten griechischen Handschriften", pp. 131–32.

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FIGURE 6.4
Codex Q 732, (16th century, illustration 18th century [1754]), Weimar, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Alexander Romance*, fol. 78*^{v}*: Alexander.* PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE HERZOGIN ANNA AMALIA BIBLIOTHEK, WEIMAR.

original work of Manouil Malaxos.[75] This case brings back to mind the urgent need for a study about the self-understanding of the Rūm tāʾifesi—the Orthodox Christian population—within the Ottoman Empire; I suppose that both ζʹ and the *Chronicle of 1570* were texts which expressed this self-understanding.

75 Early Modern Greek philology has a desperate need for a monograph on Manouil Malaxos's activities in the last decades of his life (which he spent in Constantinople). Dean Sakel, in a number of recent studies, has revealed several interesting aspects of Malaxos's work. See e.g. Sakel, "The Ottoman-era *Physiologus*"; "The Chronicle of 1570".

FIGURE 6.5
Cover sheet of a 20th century printed edition of the Alexander Romance*, published in Athens (Saliveros): Alexander.* PHOTO: U. MOENNIG.

The following information might shed some light on how widespread and popular ζ′ was: Roxandra was a common female name in the circles of the Phanariots;[76] Roxandra is the name of Darius' daughter and Alexander's wife in the manuscripts of ζ′, while the *Phyllada* renamed her Roxane (Figure 6.4).

Polyzois Lambanitsiotis, who allegedly prepared the prose text (on the basis of a newly reworded version) for the Venetian press, reworked some parts of it based on the *Rimada*; this happened in 1750.[77] Interestingly enough, an attempt of Polyzois Lambanitsiotis in 1758 to launch a completely new *Life of Alexander*, derived from historical sources, failed; this indicates how deeply interwoven into pre-national Greek identity the story presented in the *Phyllada* was.[78] From the time the *Rimada* stopped being reprinted (in the early 19th century), the *Phyllada* continued in print for more than another century. It was subject to successive linguistic updatings and modernizations. Obviously, what changed more than the bare wording were the semantics the readers of the

76 Maurelos, Η «Επαρχία της Ανυπάρκτου», p. 75.

77 Holton, *The Tale of Alexander*, pp. 37–40; Moennig, *Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte*, pp. 69, 76–88.

78 The edition of 1750 was probably done by Polyzois Lambanitsiotis; on Lambanitsiotis's attempt to circulate a more historicising *Life of Alexander*: Moennig, "Die Ἱστορία νέα τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀλεξάνδρου".

chapbook, both in the Kingdom of Greece and in the Ottoman Empire, applied to the protagonist of the *Phyllada*: from God's Champion he was transformed into a symbol for the Greekness of the Greek nation—a change in perception which was not accompanied by significant changes in the story, but by a newly designed cover-illustration (Figure 6.5).

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CHAPTER 7

A Hero Without Borders: 2 Alexander the Great in the Syriac and Arabic Tradition

Faustina C.W. Doufikar-Aerts

The famous *Alexander Romance* by Pseudo-Callisthenes (*PC*) and its derivatives form one of the most widespread, long lasting and influential traditions in literary history. Apart from its dissemination in Greek, Latin, Armenian, Hebrew and the vernaculars of medieval Europe, the Romance also became part of the cultural history of the Middle East, North Africa and the entire Islamic world.

The primary source for this 'oriental' tradition was the Syriac translation of the *Alexander Romance*. In this chapter the focus will be on the forms, varieties and aftermath of the *PC* in Syriac and Arabic literature and culture.

A The Syriac *Alexander Romance*

1 *Research History*

The history of research on the Syriac *Alexander Romance*, *Tašʿīta d-ʾAleksandrōs*, goes back to the 19th century. The text was first edited and translated by E.A. Wallis Budge in 1889.[1] The publication was prefaced by a substantial introduction. Wallis Budge based his edition on five manuscripts, the earliest of which does not predate the 18th century, while the translation is considered to have been made around 600.[2] He was of the opinion that the Syriac *PC* was not translated immediately from Greek, but by way of an intermediary Arabic translation – a theory that he shared with W. Wright.[3] The assumption, however, did not stand up for long, because, shortly after, Nöldeke launched the hypothesis that the Syriac text was based on a Middle Persian (Pahlavi) inter-

1 Some parts of it had been published earlier by Perkins/Woolsey, "Notice", pp. 357–440.

2 For a survey of the manuscripts see Wallis Budge's Introduction to his edition and the summary in Monferrer-Sala, 'Alexander the Great', pp. 45–47. Currently, J. van Ginkel has traced up to seventeen manuscripts in total. See below, note 10.

3 Walllis Budge (ed.), *Alexander Romance*, pp. xv-cvi, and in particular pp. lx–lxii.

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mediary translation.[4] According to Nöldeke, the aberrations of the Greek names could only be explained by the use of letters of the Pahlavi alphabet. Hence, he assumed that the Greek Romance had been translated, quite faithfully, into Middle Persian[5] shortly before the 7th century, and that this translation had been transposed into Syriac by a Nestorian Christian.

Subsequently, in 1891, S. Fraenkel expressed some reservations with regard to Nöldeke's argumentation.[6] Since then, however, Nöldeke's theory has not seriously been challenged until 1985, when R. Frye raised some objections – mostly of a socio-cultural nature – against the hypothesis of a Middle Persian intermediary translation.[7]

The antecedents of the Syriac *PC* came under renewed consideration and the discussion is in full swing after publications by C. Ciancaglini and K. van Bladel.[8] A recurring point of debate is whether a Middle Persian translation of the *Alexander Romance* in Sassanian times that was so 'ill-disposed to Persia and the Achaemenids' is at all conceivable.[9]

The discussion about the coming about of the Syriac text touches on an array of aspects which involve linguistics, orthography, philology, socio-cultural matters, and transmission. Since the question of the antecedent of the Syriac translation as yet has not been satisfactorily answered, the issue will receive new attention, within the current research program *Beyond the European Myth*.[10]

When we reflect on the Syriac Romance in the present state, as it has come down to us, we can observe certain distinct features. The text has preserved much of the character of the original Romance in Greek (3rd century AD); it shares this feature with the 4th century Latin translation (Iulius Valerius) and

4 Nöldeke, *Beiträge*, pp. 11–24. He came to this conclusion, mainly, on the basis of the specific features of the corruption of the Greek proper names in the Syriac text.

5 This had been briefly considered and rejected by Perkins/Woolsey, "Notice", p. 385 and p. 388.

6 Fraenkel, "Nöldeke, Th. Beiträge zur Geschichte 1890", pp. 309–30.

7 Frye, "The Pahlavi Alexander Romance".

8 See Ciancaglini, "Gli antecedenti" and ead., "The Syriac Version"; van Bladel, "The Syriac Sources".

9 Ciancaglini, "The Syriac Version", p. 136.

10 The Syriast, Jan van Ginkel, re-investigates this theory within the framework of the research program: *Beyond the European Myth. In Search of the Afro-Asiatic Alexander Cycle and the Transnational Migration of Ideas and Concepts of Culture and Identity* at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, supervised by Doufikar-Aerts. I thank van Ginkel for his useful comments and some additional bibliographical information to this paper.

the 5th century Armenian translation, which belong to the group of texts representing the α* recension of the PC.

The original Greek α* recension is no longer extant in its original form, but it essentially survived in a unique, although late and defective, copy from the 11th century, known as codex A.[11] More specifically, however, the Syriac PC is believed to hark back to a Greek δ* recension, a revised sub-recension of α*. This δ* recension has not survived, but it is considered as the antecedent also of the 10th-century Latin translation of the PC, *Nativitas et Victoria Alexandri Magni*, completed by Leo Archipresbyter. This translation in turn underlies the reworked versions of the renowned *Historia de Preliis*.[12] As a consequence, the Syriac PC as well as the *Nativitas* and its derivative, the *HdP*, are the only representatives of the δ* recension. Therefore, comparative research into these texts is a desideratum, since it would highly amplify our insight into δ* – and the archetypal α*, which it reflects. Be this as it may, for the moment the most relevant text to trace back the antecedents of the Syriac PC is the text of the Armenian PC. It is believed that this is the best preserved exponent of the α* recension.

Therefore, the Armenian text (in English translation) is most suitable for the purpose of unraveling the development of the text tradition from α* to δ*.

A comparison of the contents of the Syriac and Armenian Romances reveals that the texts have much in common, although the latter is at some points more complete and probably the closest of all surviving versions of the Romance to how the original Greek PC may have looked. A detailed analysis and comparison of both texts on the level of their contents also remains a desideratum. I will give an impression as an initial impetus to explore this field.

In fact, since Nöldeke's *Beiträge*, the Syriac PC as a whole has never been object of in-depth research, although its English translation is often used as a source of reference. This contrasts with the number of studies dedicated by scholars in the past century to the 7th-century Syriac apocalyptic texts staging Alexander as their protagonist. The apocalyptic tradition attracted significant interest and important progress was made in the field.[13] This scholarly attention coincides with the degree of influence of the Syriac apocalypses, in

11 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 1711. For the details about the different recensions of the PC I refer the reader to my stemma in my monograph, Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, p. 91.

12 See Telfryn Pritchard, *The History of Alexander's Battles*.

13 Czeglédy, 'The Syriac Legend'; Reinink, 'Das Syrische Alexanderlied'; idem, 'Die Entstehung der Syrischen Alexanderlegende'; idem, 'Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History'; idem, 'Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius'; idem, 'Heraclius, the New Alexander'; idem, 'Alexander de Great'.

particular the *Apocalypse* by Pseudo-Methodius, in medieval Europe, which was far more than the after effects of the Syriac PC itself.[14]

The tradition of the 7th-century Syriac apocalypses is a tradition of its own, which originated separately from the translation of the PC. The core of this apocalyptic tradition is the anonymous *Christian Syriac Alexander Legend* (*Neṣḥānā dīleh d-'Aleksandrōs*) (hencefort CSAL), which portrays Alexander as a pre-Christian forerunner of the Christian Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. In this Alexander-Heraclius typology Alexander's exploits foreshadow the political situation in the 7th century – that is to say Heraclius' defeat of the Persian King Khosroes II in 627. In the eyes of the author of the CSAL and his contemporaries, this event inaugurated the foundation of a durable Christian Byzantine Empire, which was to last until the End of Times. Soon after, the CSAL was endorsed by another similar poetic apocalyptic text, the *Alexander Poem* (*Memrā*),[15] by Pseudo-Jacob of Serugh, and several decades later by the *Apocalypse* by Pseudo-Methodios. An important element in these apocalypses is the confinement of the unclean nations, Gog and Magog, by Alexander behind an impenetrable barrier in the mountains of the North. This motif also plays a role in the Islamic tradition, which will be further addressed below.

As to the Syriac PC, it only recently received renewed attention in David Zuwiyya's *Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages*. In his contribution to this volume, J.P. Monferrer-Sala treats the entire Syriac tradition, with special attention for the Syriac version of the PC.[16] His study of the Syriac literary tradition about Alexander is a welcome contribution to the field after a long interval; it should be taken as a starting point for more in-depth research.[17]

14 This in contrast to the influence of both the Syriac PC and the apocalypses in the oriental tradition.

15 The full title reads: *Poem on the Pious King Alexander and on the Gate which he Built against Gog and Magog*.

16 Monferrer-Sala, "Alexander the Great", p. 42.

17 Unfortunately, some details raise confusion and need renewed attention. In his article, p. 42 and note 10, Monferrer-Sala mistakenly maintains that the Syriac *Alexander Romance* is a Nestorian product from ca. 628 AD, which was composed for *propagandistic purposes* referring to Reinink, "Alexander the Great in Seventh-Century Syriac 'Apocalyptic' Texts" for this information. Reinink developed this view with regard to the CSAL, not with regard to the Syriac translation of the Pseudo-Callisthenes *Alexander Romance*. On p. 44 of the same article he again refers to Brock, *A Brief Outline* for a similar dating (ca. 628 AD) as well as to Czeglédy, "The Syriac Legend", but these authors both consider in their essays the CSAL and not the PC. In short, it does not bring us a step closer to delineating the background of the Syriac translator of the PC.

2 *Contents of the Syriac PC as Compared with the Armenian PC*

The Syriac Romance is an exponent of the δ* recension of the Greek *PC*. This recension derives from the α* recension.[18] Both are no longer extant, but 'represented' by Syriac (δ*) and codex A and Armenian (α*). In spite of the connection between the two branches, Syriac exhibits obvious changes.[19]

In the Syriac *PC*, the Hellenistic polytheistic character of the text is maintained, although, according to Wallis Budge, some minor (Nestorian?) interferences can be seen.[20] In accordance with the Armenian *PC*, the Syriac text keeps to the Greek pantheon, but the transmitter/translator very often elucidates the names of deities with glosses – they apparently needed an explanation because they had become alien to the environment and readers – in order to make the text suitable for a contemporary audience. A persistent feature is the peculiar transferal of proper names, geographical indications, nations and signs of the Zodiac. In many cases they are completely corrupted in Syriac, by misinterpretation, by major and continuous scribal errors, or perhaps on purpose (?), in the process of translation or at a later stage.

18 See above, pp. 192 and note 11.

19 A summary of the contents of the Syriac *PC* by Monferrer-Sala, clustered according to the motifs in the different sections, provides a quick overview over the text as a whole. See Monferrer-Sala, "Alexander the Great", pp. 60–63.

20 For example the utterance "'Into thy hands I leave my spirit'" (*Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 2:12, ed. Wallis Budge, p. 81) spoken by Darius at his death, in direct speech, is an alteration in comparison to the Greek (codex A) which, in translation, reads: "Having spoken these words he expired his spirit (*pneuma*) into the hands of Alexander" (*Alexander Romance*, ed. Müller, p. 78, left column: "Καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν Δαρεῖος ἐξέπνευσε τὸ πνεῦμα ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν Ἀλεξάνδρου"). T. Gargiulo/R. Stoneman, *Il Romanzo* di Alessandro (Scrittori Greci et Latini), vol. 2, Milan 2012, p. 184, follow Müller with the *a*-variation: "Καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν Δαρεῖος ἐξέπνευσε τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ παραθεὶς ταῖς χερσὶν Ἀλεξάνδρου". In the edition by Kroll, p. 92: "τοσαῦτα λέξας ὁ βασιλεὺς Δαρεῖος ἔλειψε τὸ πνεῦμα ἐν χερσὶν Ἀλεξάνδρου". The alteration in the Syriac text is considered as inspired by the Christian mind of the translator, recalling *NT*, Luke 23:46 "'Ο Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, 'Πάτερ, εἰς χεῖράς σου παραθήσομαι/ παρατίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου'· καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν ἐξέπνευσεν". In *Alexander Romance*, Armenian version § 197, trans. Wolohojian, p. 105: "And when Darius had spoken these last words, he expired in the arms of the word conqueror, Alexander". In Pfister, "Der Alexanderroman", p. 51, based on ed. Kroll: "Nachdem der König Dareios so gesprochen hatte, gab er seinen Geist in Alexanders Armen auf".

Occasionally, the order of events in the Syriac PC differs from the sequence in the Armenian PC,[21] while sometimes paragraphs are shortened[22] or enlarged.[23] In other cases, whole passages occur in one text, while they are missing in the other.[24] Through the entire texts in Armenian and Syriac, smaller and larger variances appear, but by far the most fundamental modification is the extended form of the Letter from Alexander to Aristotle in Book three.[25] This letter, which is commonly known as the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, continues with many more episodes in the Syriac PC, where the letter in the Armenian version has come to an end with the story of the Speaking Trees of the Sun and the Moon.[26]

21 In *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 1:16, ed. Wallis Budge, p. 17, taming the horse Bucephalus by Alexander follows immediately on the Pythian oracle in Delphi predicting about Philip's successor: "he shall make the mighty steed which is called Bucephalus (the interpretation of which is Bull-head) run through Pella". In *Alexander Romance*, Armenian version, trans. Wolohojian § 36, p. 36 and §§ 47–48, pp. 38–39, we find these two scenes separated by the correspondence between Zeuxis, Aristotle and Philip and Olympias (ibid. §§ 37–46, pp. 36–38). In the *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 1:17, ed. Wallis Budge pp. 19–21, this passage – in which the tutor's name, Zeuxis, is given as Zintōs – follows on the taming of the horse. The two texts run parallel again with the episode of the Olympic games in Pisa.

22 In *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 1:33, ed. Wallis Budge, pp. 42–3, the episode of the foundation of Alexandria is shortened on some points, as compared to Arm., among others the plotting of the circumference of the city with a track of meal, and the related prediction (*Alexander Romance*, Armenian version § 85, Wolohojian, p. 50) and the inscription of the letters A, B, C, D, E, meaning "A, Alexander; B, the greatest king; C, of the greatest nations; D, in the place of Aramazd; E, descended and built a unique city". (ibid. § 87, p. 51) For the original meaning according to the Greek alphabet, Α, Β, Γ, Δ, Ε, see Doufikar-Aerts, "Alexander the Great and the Pharos", pp. 191–202.

23 The episode of the Olympic games in *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 1:18–19, ed. Wallis Budge, pp. 21–28, is more elaborate than in Armenian version § 49–55 (pp. 39–41).

24 The story of Alexander's illness after his bath in the "water called Oceanus", the treatment by his physician, Philip, and the treason by general Parmenion, as reported in *Alexander Romance*, Armenian version §§ 154–57, ed. Wolohojian, pp. 86–87, is absent from the Syriac PC. Also two following episodes, the one where Alexander is bridging the river Aracani and demolishing the bridge after his army's passage so as to discourage his soldiers from taking to flight later (ibid. §§ 158–60, pp. 87–89), and the other where Alexander suffers an unsuccessful murder attempt from the part of a disguised Persian satrap (ibid. §§ 162–163, p. 89) do not occur in Syriac. On the other hand, Syriac gives an extended part of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle, alien to the Armenian and most of the other recensions, as will be shown below and note 25.

25 *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 3:7, ed. Wallis Budge, pp. 94–117.

26 *Alexander Romance*, Armenian version § 224, ed. Wolohojian, pp. 123–31.

First, we find in Syriac the story of the mountain controlled by a dragon, which Alexander "cunningly" overcomes by feeding it oxen hides, stuffed with gypsum, pitch, lead, and sulphur, so that the monster explodes.[27] Then, Syriac continues, with Alexander's arrival at the river Barsāṭis/Bīrsāṭōs and the sapphire mountain. He is told by a voice from the mountain, speaking in Greek, that he is not allowed to advance, unless he goes alone, in order to behold something beautiful.[28] Alexander builds a city there, which he calls "Alexandria, the queen of the mountains", and he erects a bronze statue.

Next, we are told about Alexander's visit to the King of China, where he pretends to be his own ambassador, Pīthāōs (Pyteas?). After this entertaining episode, which I will treat in more detail below, we are told about Alexander's subsequent journeys to the country called Ṣebāẓāẓ, and the land of the Sogdians, Sōd (Sogd), where he builds the city of Samarkand, and his arrival at the crystal river Barṭēsīṭōs.[29] He constructs a pontoon-bridge to cross the river. Next, still according to the letter, Alexander stays for five months in a fertile region, populated by simple-minded people, where he builds a city, which he names " 'a part of Cūsh', (..) called in Persian *Behli*".[30] In the city two temples are built, dedicated to Zeus and Rhea respectively, and a bronze statue is erected, of himself and his friend, Īdmālos. Continuing his journey, he clashes with Paryōg and his band, notorious cattle-thieves who were after his cattle and horses. After their victory over the assailers, Alexander builds a city at a junction of rivers, filled in with earth, which he called "Margiōs, that is Mārō (Merv)", and a temple dedicated to Ammon.[31] The next episode, relating Alexander's visit to Kundāḳa (Candace), the queen of the Samrāyē (the people of Semiramis), is still part of the letter; it continues in direct speech, but after a paragraph, direct speech becomes indirect speech. From here on the text again runs parallel with Armenian.[32] This episode is followed by Alexander's encounter with the Amazons.[33]

27 *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 3:7, ed. Wallis Budge, pp. 107–09.

28 Somehow this passage looks like the introduction to the episode (in repetition?) of Alexander visiting the golden temple of Dionysus on top of the mountain, which occurs earlier in the letter (*Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 3:7, ed. Wallis Budge, p. 101–02).

29 See above, the river Barsāṭis/Bīrsāṭōs.

30 *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 3:7, ed. Wallis Budge, p. 116.

31 *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 3:7, ed. Wallis Budge, p. 117.

32 *Alexander Romance*, Armenian version §§ 225–49, ed. Wolohojian, pp. 131–41.

33 *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 3:15–17, ed. Wallis Budge, pp. 127–31. *Alexander Romance*, Armenian version §§ 251–55, ed. Wolohojian, pp. 141–44.

Before Alexander's arrival in Babylon, he receives an Elevating Letter from his teacher Aristotle.[34] It is interesting to see that in Syriac the purport of the message has radically changed in comparison with the Armenian:

> (…) I say this to you because your deeds have been accomplished at about the age of thirty. They say that Alexander, the Macedonian, has reached from the West to the East; and people from the West and people from the East, the Ethiopians and the Scythians, joyfully welcomed him. And others who thought of opposing you have beseechingly petitioned you to befriend them. *Indeed, you are a godlike king*. Fare thee well.[35]

And in Syriac:

> (…) Thou hast been able to do all these things by the aid of the gods, for at present thou art but thirty years of age, and by the assistance of the gods thou hast performed such deeds as no other lord has been able to do in a number of years. *Therefore thou art under many obligations to the gods*, and now the time has come for thee to pay them back with sacrifice and incense, for great is thy debt to the gods who have honoured thee, and thou wilt not be able to pay it in a short time.[36]

Alexander's arrival in Babylon marks the final part of the PC, which is commonly known as The Last Days of Alexander.[37] It constitutes of a number of distinct episodes, starting with Alexander's letter to his mother Olympias,[38] followed by the ominous birth of a partly dead, partly living *monstrum*. The third episode is the assassination of Alexander by poison, and the fourth is the uproar among the soldiers and the parade on the Hippodrome. In the next episode Alexander dictates his testament, and in the last episodes Alexander dies, and is transported to and buried in Alexandria, in Egypt. Finally, a list is given of 12/13 the cities he built, also bearing the name 'Alexandria'. The Last Days of Alexander in various traditions and languages have been examined in several studies.[39]

34 See below, p. 202, the Arabic version of Aristotle's "Elevating Letter" and note 57.

35 *Alexander Romance*, Armenian version § 256, ed. Wolohojian, p. 144.

36 *Alexander Romance,* Syriac version 3:17, ed. Wallis Budge, p. 131.

37 See Aerts (ed.), *Alexander the Great*.

38 *Alexander Romance*, Armenian version § 258, ed. Wolohojian, pp. 145–47; *Alexander Romance*, Syriac version 3:17–18, pp. 131–34.

39 Aerts (ed.), *Alexander the Great*, and Doufikar-Aerts, "Les derniers jours"; ead., "The Last Days".

After this broad outline of the character of the Syriac *PC* I will exemplify the Romance by a passage from the extended part of the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle – i.e. Alexander's visit to the King of China.

> When we arrived in China, I gave myself the name Pīthāōs the ambassador of king Alexander. When we approached the gate of the king of China, they went in and informed him of my arrival, and he gave orders to question me outside. Then Gundāphār, the chief of his army, questioned me concerning my coming to China, and I said to him, 'I am an ambassador of king Alexander.' And Gundāphār said to me, 'Why hast thou come hither?' And I said, 'I have been sent to the king of China; my message is to him; and it is not right for me to utter the message which I bring from my master before thee.' Then Gundāphār went in to the king of China and informed him, and the king ordered the palace to be decorated, and silk curtains to be hung up, and a golden couch to be prepared; and he bade them call me. When I entered his presence, I did not make obeisance to him, and he questioned me, and said to me. 'Whence comest thou?' I answered and said, 'I am the ambassador of king Alexander.' And he said to me, 'Who is Alexander?' I said, 'He is a Macedonian, the lord of the world, and the bearer [of the sovereignty] of the Persians and Indians.' And he said to me, 'where is the land of Macedonia?' I said, 'In the western quarter of the world, at the place where the sun sets'.[40]

The conversation continues and the ambassador's message is that the king has to surrender to Alexander, but since he is a clever man he is considered reasonable enough to do this of his own free will. The next morning the ambassador did reverence to the king and when the latter asked why he acted differently from the day before, he answered:

> 'Yesterday I myself by the words of my message was clothed in the person of Alexander; in me, O king, thou didst see Alexander, and in the speech of my lips thou didst hear that of Alexander; but to-day [I am] Pīthāōs the ambassador'.[41]

The king of China sends a cloak with Pīthāōs to Alexander in his size (small) and a crown of gold studded with gems, and he reminds Alexander via 'his

40 *Alexander Romance*, Syriac version 3:7, ed. Wallis Budge, pp. 109–10.

41 Ibid. 3:7, p. 111.

ambassador' that good fortune may not always be on his side.[42] With this message he sends him many gifts:

> (…) thousand talents; ten thousand pieces of undyed silks, and five thousand brocaded silks; two hundred figures of cane, and one hundred painted (?) skins, and one thousand Indian swords; five wild horses, and one thousand skins of musk, and ten snakes' horns (?), each of which was a cubit long.[43]

Although the 'ambassador' hesitates to accept this he nonetheless does, because he realizes:

> 'If I do not take them, peradventure he may have doubts of me and may find out that I am Alexander'.[44]

The reminder about good fortune of the king of China in this episode demonstrates the tenor in the second part of the *PC*, after the defeat of the Indian King Porus, in which it becomes clear that Alexander's life or fortune has changed course. This theme starts with Alexander's meeting with the Brahmins, and it continues in the encounters with the Amazons and Queen Candace. If we try to interpret this process, the events give the impression that, on the one hand, Alexander's exploits are placed in a different light: the confrontations seem to detract from the significance of his earlier achievements. On the other hand, it is possible that they do not carry the message of the vanity of all terrestrial achievements in the first place, but are just meant to point to the fact that his good fortune has started to fade, ending in his untimely ill-fated death.

With these observations we have highlighted various important aspects of the Syriac *PC* tradition, which in turn was followed by a vast aftermath that developed and spread, from the second half of the 7th century onwards, to the entire Islamic world.

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42 The motif of good fortune and warnings concerning its fickleness is traceable already in Herodotus. W.J. Aerts drew my attention to the story of King Polycrates of Samos and his 'ally' King Amasis of Egypt in Herodotus, *Histories*, III §§ 39–44 (ed., trans. G.C. Macaulay, London 1890): King Amasis writes to Polycrates: (§ 40) "It is a pleasant thing indeed to hear that one who is a friend and guest is faring well; yet to me thy great fortune is not pleasing, since I know that the Divinity is jealous".

43 *Alexander Romance*, Syrian version 3:7, ed. Wallis Budge, pp. 112–13.

44 Ibid. 3:7, p. 113.

B The Arabic *Alexander Romance*

The Arabic-Islamic world has a large and rich Alexander tradition. For the greater part, this tradition goes back to Syriac texts, not only to the Syriac PC, but also to apocalyptic literature in Syriac, as mentioned above.[45] It is notable that we can find traces of the Syriac PC in Arabic texts from the late 8th-early 9th centuries, and later in Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Ethiopic, Central Asian Turkic languages, Urdu, Malay and other languages of the Indian Archipelago and Mongolian.[46]

1 *History of Research and Transmission*

The history of research into the Arabic versions of the PC started with the *Beiträge* by Th. Nöldeke, followed by a detailed study by Weymann.[47] From the beginning, the study of the Arabic translation of the PC was hampered by the fact that no copy of the text seemed to have survived. Theories about its form and character were based on abridged versions, handed down by Arab historians, transmitters of Wisdom literature and Tales of the Prophets.[48] This situation has now changed; since the beginning of this century, several manuscripts of the Arabic PC have been found, which make it possible to study the tradition on the basis of existing material and to verify previous hypotheses.[49] My reconstruction of the tradition on the basis of the material in Arabic available in the past centuries, augmented by re-surfaced material in manuscripts which were mostly unknown or neglected, resulted in a new stemma.[50] From the study of the corpus of texts as a whole, it became clear that more than one translation into Arabic was made from the Syriac PC, probably both dating from the 9th century. One of the translations is a complete Arabic *Alexander Romance*, based on Pseudo-Callisthenes; it is titled *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar*

45 An up-to-date overview of research in the fields of the Syriac and Arabic Alexander traditions has recently been published by Sidarus, "Nouvelles recherches".

46 In ʿUmāra ibn Zayd's (†circa 815) *Qiṣṣat al-Iskandar Dhūlqarnayn* (*sic*) (The Story of Alexander, the Two-horned) we find passages which represent the Syriac PC quite closely.

47 Nöldeke, "Beiträge"; Weymann, "Die aethiopische und arabische Übersetzung".

48 See my monograph, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*.

49 At present I have re-surfaced two complete manuscripts of the *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar Dhūlqarnayn* (Biography of King Alexander, the Two-horned) and two incomplete manuscripts of the same text. They provide a version of the PC, based on the Syriac, and representing, mainly, the δ* recension of the *Alexander Romance*. My edition with English translation is in preparation.

50 See above, note 11 and note 18.

Dhūlqarnayn (sic)[51] (Biography of King Alexander, the Two-Horned) and its main manuscript is copied by a scribe known as Quzmān (17th century). I have coined this tradition 'the Quzmān redaction' after this copyist. The 'completeness', however, must be taken in a relative sense. The text of the *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar Dhūlqarnayn* is rather a reworking: some parts of the three books of the original (α*) and the Syriac Romance were not included and perhaps they were never translated or transmitted in Arabic.[52] Its importance lays not only in the fact that it is the sole surviving Arabic representative in full of the *PC*, but also in the fact that this Quzmān redaction is the predecessor for the translation of the *Alexander Romance* into Ethiopic, realized between 14th and 16th century. It has been shown to represent the text which is intermediary to the Syriac and the Ethiopic versions of the *PC*. In the Quzmān redaction, as well as in the Ethiopic *PC*, the polytheistic character has not been maintained.[53] Instead, the intermediary Arabic version displays an unusual Christian-Islamic mixture of features.

The other independent translation of the Syriac *PC* into Arabic is not available in a continuous text, but is extant only in fragments, which can be found scattered throughout different manuscripts, mainly of an Arabic popular romance, entitled *Sīrat al-Iskandar Dhūlqarnayn* (Biography of Alexander the Two-horned).[54] The fragments mostly consist of separate episodes, each of which are inserted as an interpolation into the various manuscripts of the popular romances. They are clearly based on the Syriac *PC*, but they do not represent the translation in the Quzmān redaction. They have adopted an Islamic character, but did not integrate the Christian features. So far, five of these episodes have been traced: Alexander's incognito visit to Darius,[55]

51 The epithet, Dhū l-Qarnayn, the Two-Horned, has become a proper name, in a fixed form, not anymore subject to case inflexion: Dhūlqarnayn.

52 See Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, 'final conclusions', § 1.8, pp. 76–91.

53 The Ethiopian tradition was last addressed by Kotar "The Ethiopic Alexander Romance". Unfortunately, part of the information and conclusions in this article must be adapted in agreement with the new developments in the Arabic Alexander tradition.

54 This title should not be confused with the title of the aforementioned Qūzman redaction. A comprehensive summary of the contents of the unpublished *Sīrat al-Iskandar* (ms. Aya Sofya 3003) is given in Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 283–367. An edition of this manuscript is also in preparation.

55 See Doufikar-Aerts, "Al-Iskandar en Dārīnūsh".

Alexander's encounter with the Amazons,[56] Aristotle's Elevating Letter,[57] Alexander's Letter to Aristotle, known as the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*[58] and The Last Days of Alexander.[59] It is possible that still more of these episodes will be found, and, because of the consistency in style, it is plausible that the fragments once belonged to one text. It is difficult to determine, as yet, whether this was a second (complete) parallel translation of the Syriac PC into Arabic. It cannot be ruled out that this text was only a compendium of selected episodes. The significance of these so called *Sīra* interpolations[60] is their specific quality, manifested in the close translation of the Syriac text, which is quite exceptional for this genre. It is also important that this material may have been one of the sources for the chapters on Sekandar in Firdawsī's *Shahnama*.[61]

2 Nature of the Arabic PC Tradition

As mentioned above, the Arabic Alexander tradition is exceedingly ramified. Therefore it is only possible to address a few major aspects. One of these traits is the influence of Islam and Christianity on the tradition. The Islamic component is explained by the integration of the character of Alexander in religious texts and theology.

From the start of the Alexander tradition in Arabic, 'al-Iskandar' was identified with the Quranic figure Dhū l-Qarnayn (The Two-Horned). He was called by this name, sometimes with the two elements joined – al-Iskandar Dhūl-qarnayn – or sometimes only Dhūlqarnayn, and he was considered the builder of the Wall against Gog and Magog. The rationale for this identification is a much discussed issue, which cannot be addressed here at length. The key point is that the association of the Quranic Dhū l-Qarnayn with Alexander by Arab authors made perfect sense when there was no canonized 'real historical' version of Alexander's life; in the apocalyptic-minded circumstances of the time, the concurrences, in particular between elements in the Qur'ān verses

56 See Doufikar-Aerts, "De Arabische Alexanderroman en Alexanders ontmoeting met de Amazonen".

57 See Doufikar-Aerts, "Dionysus, Enoch and Zakhraf", p. 124. The Armenian and Syriac versions of this letter have been quoted above, see p. 197 and note 34.

58 See Doufikar-Aerts, "Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem"; eadem, "A letter in Bits and Pieces".

59 Doufikar-Aerts, "Les derniers jours"; eadem, "The Last Days of Alexander".

60 I first described the fragments using this term. See Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 74–76.

61 Some aspects of Alexander's incognito visit to Darius occur exclusively in these Arabic manuscripts and the Persian text. See above, note 55: Doufikar-Aerts, "Al-Iskandar en Dārīnūsh", p. 193; see also the chapter by J. Rubanovich in this volume pp. 212–24.

(18:83–100) and the contemporary Syriac apocalyptic literature – staging Alexander as the confiner of Gog and Magog / Yājūj wa Mājūj – were too obvious to overlook. Moreover, Alexander's role in salvation history as expressed by Syriac interpreters of contemporary dramatic events, and his devout reputation in the early 7th century, were just as legitimate a reputation as any other. As a consequence, the Arabic Alexander tradition joined the Dhū l-Qarnayn elements with the *PC*-based storyline, resulting in an integrated version of a heroic and religious character; this became the basis for derivatives in the entire Islamic world.

Most characteristic for the Quzmān redaction – which is the most complete exponent of the *PC* in Arabic – is the fact that it incorporated large episodes from the *Christian Syriac Alexander Legend*, and the Letters of Consolation to Alexander's mother,[62] which are fully integrated in the text, next to the Islamic adaptations.

Apart from that, the Quzmān redaction lies at the basis of the Ethiopic *PC* and it was influenced by the Coptic milieu, in which it was transmitted in the 17th century, or perhaps earlier.

In order to substantiate the character of the Arabic tradition, I will juxtapose a paragraph of Alexander's visit to the King of China from the Quzmān redaction, which has never before been edited or printed.

> So we continued until we came to the land of Ṣīn (China), and this country is called Tāwūs.[63] There I ordered a small group of my men not to call me by this name (=Alexander/Dhūlqarnayn).[64] (…) When I had arrived at the gate of the palace of the King of China the doorkeeper went in to ask for permission from the king to let me in and he said: 'Oh King, at the door we have an ambassador, sent by the King of the Rūm (Greeks), Dhūlqarnayn.' 'Ask him what he wants and why he came here.' The

62 In Greek the Letter of Consolation to Olympias is an interpolation in some manuscripts of the the β-redaction of the *PC*, in particular transmitted in its sub-redaction L. I owe the latest information to Caterina Franchi (Bologna). See *Alexander's Letter to his mother,* ed. A. Spitaler, "Die Arabische Fassung des Trostbriefs Alexander an seine Mutter", in *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Georgio Levi Della Vida*, vol. 2, Rome 1956, pp. 493–508. Recently the Arabic Letters of Consolation were treated in the Master's thesis by Armin Jakschik, *Konsolationsliteratur im Arabischen. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Entstehung und Entwicklung von Alexanders Trostbrief an seine Mutter im arabischen Alexanderroman,* Mainz University 2013.

63 This phrase is corrupted. It should say that Alexander ordered his companions to call *him* (Mi)tāwus (Pithāōs).

64 Alexander wants to pretend that he is Mitāwus, his ambassador.

> doorkeeper returned to me and said: 'Oh messenger, what brings you here and what is your business and what do you want?' I said: 'I am the ambassador of Dhūlqarnayn, the King of the Yunānīyūn (Greeks).'[65] He said: 'Tell me, what is your message' and I said to him: 'You are a fool and your master is even more foolish, because he appoints a servant at his gate who wants to know the secret messages between sovereigns before his own master is informed. Have I been sent to the King of China or to you for that matter? I will not reveal my message to you or to anyone else!' The man went inside and told him the messenger's words. Then, the King gave orders to prepare for him his seat in a session chamber of the palace, which was splendid, and to spread a cover on the throne, which was made of gold inlaid with pearls and rubies. (..) Then, he ordered his doorkeeper to bring Dhūlqarnayn's envoy before him. (..) When I entered the room with the doorkeeper I praised God. Then, I stood before him for a long time, because he did not give me permission to sit down, and choose not to address me with words (..) Then, the doorkeeper reproachfully spoke to me, saying: 'Where do you come from and what do you want? Tell me what brought you here, unless you want to die in silence!' I said to the doorkeeper: 'You are a fool, the more so because I told you the first time that I have not been sent to you, but to someone else: I was sent to the King, not to his servant and there is no need for the doorkeeper to know the message before his own master does. I will not inform anyone of my matters, but the King in person!' Now that he had seen this from me, he allowed me to speak to the King of China and permitted me to sit next to him on the throne. He spoke to me: 'Who are you, who sent you and what do you want?' I said to him: 'I am the ambassador of Dhūlqarnayn, the King of the Greeks (Yūnānīyūn)'. And he said to me: 'And who then is Dhūlqarnayn?' I said to him: 'The Macedonian (al-Maqdūnī), King of the world, the servant of God and the overlord of all the armies on earth.' He said to me: 'Where is Macedonia?' I said to him: 'It is in the west, near to the place of sunset.' (...)

The "ambassador" boasts about Alexander's victories over the Persian King Dārā, and the Indian King Fūz (Darius and Porus), and commands him to surrender, because

> 'he wanted to come to you with his armies in order to destroy your country and wipe out your cities. (..) However, if [the King of China] is a man

65 This time the word *Yūnānīyūn*, not *Rūm*, is used, also meaning 'Greeks'.

of wisdom and good judgment, as I was told, let him then listen to me and obey my commands. Then, I will let him and his kingdom in peace.' (..) When he [the King] heard my words, he said to me: 'Hasten yourself to your master, oh Mitāwus, and tell him: 'This is our answer to your letter. I understood (the message of) the man whom you sent to us. We have heard what God has bestowed up on you and the position you have been given on earth.[66] (..).This is not just God's favor upon you, nay, it is God's scourge and vengeance released upon the creatures[67] for whom He wanted eternal damnation. I am well aware that this happened by the decree of God and His divine ordinance and His limitation of their lifetime. When their time had come to an end, He granted you victory over them and His divine ordinance has exalted you and trodden them down. Verily, God has given to you what He has not given to anyone before you, nor will be given to anyone after you. You must be aware of that, as you have seen, and realize that you should not let the world deceive you, because it is misleading: it has destroyed men before you and it can also carry you away just as you have wiped things out. Luck does not always stay on your side; you will leave it to others, and depart from its side. (..) Do not hold it against me that I am not there, physically, to speak the words that ought to be said in compliance with your command: "I hear and obey to God, and then to you." Do not come to our country to seek war with us. We will pay you tribute and, moreover, we have never withdrawn for an enemy in an encounter, and we do not surrender to any man or submit ourselves.' (..)'

Then, he sealed his letter and gave it to Mitāwus, the ambassador. He said to him: 'Go to Dhūlqarnayn and extend to him many salutations and my most fervent and warmest greetings and speak on behalf of me these words: 'Your servant wishes for you benediction and victory. He sends you gifts, mayest you accept them from me.' '[68] And he sent him his crown that he wore on his head and he said: 'You are more entitled to it than I am'. And he sent him a quantity of hundred *roṭl* (pounds) of excellent silk, measured by the *roṭl* of Constantinople.

There follows an extensive list of gifts, ending with:

66 This is a reference to the Qur'an verse 18:84.

67 This may well be a reference to Qur'an verse 89:13.

68 This scene can be found in various variants in other texts, *Leyenda de Alejandro* (23), Mubashshir, *Selection of Maxims* (237), 'Umāra, *Qiṣṣat al-Iskandar, Dhūlqarnayn* (51v-52r).

> twenty 'snakes horns', each of which with the length of a cubit.

The ambassador then says:

> 'Besides, I did not want to receive any of these gifts, but, that is to say, being after all 'the ambassador of Dhūlqarnayn', and out of fear that it might become clear that I was Dhūlqarnayn in person, and in order to prevent that he would seize me and do with me as he pleased, I accepted all these gifts from him, although I had to deceive him, against my will. I said: 'All this is like nothing in the eyes of my master'.[69]

Even in this abridged form it becomes clear that the Arabic version of the encounter with the King of China underwent significant changes as compared to the Syriac. The passage is much more elaborate and detailed. The King of China utters exhortations of a religious nature, which is sometimes recognizable as specifically Islamic. Also a Biblical-inspired concept of *vanitas* can be perceived from the King's reply. The arguments are also reminiscent of Alexander's encounter with the Brahmins, elsewhere in the *PC*.

To conclude: in this exemplary episode the character of the Quzmān-type Arabic version of the *PC* is well conveyed. It is a fresh shoot on the Alexander stemma, presenting an intriguing mixture of novelties and conventional roots.

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69 The translation is my own. It is based on my ongoing critical edition drawing on four manuscripts, of which the leading one is the Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. arabe 3687, fols. 52^{v}–56^{r}.

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CHAPTER 8

A Hero Without Borders: 3 Alexander the Great in the Medieval Persian Tradition

Julia Rubanovich

Sources

The medieval Persian Alexander tradition emerged as a result of the conflation and merging of variegated sources, encompassing the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, Zoroastrian religious texts, the Qurʾān and surrounding exegetical literature, Arabic historiographic and wisdom literature, as well as orally-transmitted folk traditions.

Since the chain of transmission has many omissions, reconstruction of the ways by which the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* entered the Iranian domain remains hypothetical. The crux of the problem concerns the interrelation of the Middle Persian (= Pahlavi; lost) and the Syriac (extant) translations, both belonging to the reconstructed δ recension.[1] While the classical hypothesis introduced by Theodor Nöldeke suggests that the Pahlavi translation was made from Greek (presumably in the 6th century) and served as a prototype for the Syriac rendition,[2] a more recent view by Claudia A. Ciancaglini advocates the primacy of the Syriac translation executed directly from Greek and later translated into Middle Persian.[3] The Syriac version gave rise to several Arabic translations (presumably in the late 8th – early 9th centuries), some of which possessed a Christian hue.[4] These in turn were rendered into New Persian not later than the first half of the 10th century.[5] Since not a single New Persian translation of

1 For recension δ*, see the contributions by U. Moennig and F. Doufikar-Aerts in this volume, pp. 160–89 and 190–209 respectively.

2 Nöldeke, *Beiträge*, esp. pp. 1–24.

3 Ciancaglini, "Gli antecedenti del *Romanzo* siriaco di Alessandro"; ead., "The Syriac Version"; see also Wiesehöfer, "The 'Accursed' and the 'Adventurer'", p. 128 and note 48 there.

4 On the potential multiplicity of Arabic translations from Syriac, see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 76–90 and stemma on p. 91; on the Christian nature of some Arabic versions, see ibid., pp. 71–72; Macuch, "Pseudo-Callisthenes Orientalis", p. 260; see also below, pp. 212–13.

5 The time-period when the Greek *Alexander Romance* was introduced into the Iranian tradition is subject to controversy. According to one opinion, it was included already in the Middle Persian chronicle *Xᵛadāy-nāmag* ("The Book of Lords") which started taking shape some time

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the Greek *Alexander Romance* has come down to us, this translational movement can be reconstructed only with the help of vestiges found in early medieval Persian texts dealing with the Alexander material.

Running parallel to the penetration of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* into the Perso-Arabic domain, Alexander's figure was susceptible to the adaptive process of Islamisation, which became possible on account of the exegetic activity revolving around the mysterious character of Dhū al-Qarnayn ("The Two-Horned"), mentioned in a Qurʾanic *sūra* (Q 18: 83–97). According to one interpretation, ultimately accepted as authoritative, Dhū al-Qarnayn is identified with Alexander the Greek – al-Iskandar al-Rūmī – who was sent by God to subdue the peoples of the World, calling them to the monotheistic faith.[6] The status of Dhū al-Qarnayn in exegetical literature, however, always remained controversial: while some exegetes conceded that he was a prophet, albeit sent "without a revelation" (*ghayr mursal*), others confined his status to that of "a pious servant of God" (*al-ʿabd al-ṣāliḥ*) and a virtuous ruler.[7] Among the major themes of the Dhū al-Qarnayn tradition are the discussion of his appellative; the complex of motifs relating to the building of the Wall against Gog and

in the 6th century and comprised a semi-official written account of Iranian national history through the lens of the Sasanian dynasty (see, e.g., Bertel's, "Glavnye versii", p. 289; Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romance*s, pp. 91–99). Another, more plausible view, suggests that Alexander material could have been incorporated into the *Xʷadāy-nāmag* only later, with the latter's translation and re-working into Arabic some time in the 8th or 9th centuries (see, e.g., Frye, "Two Iranian Notes", pp. 187–88, note 5; Yarshater, "Iranian National History", p. 472).

6 For a detailed discussion of the Qurʾanic story of Dhū al-Qarnayn from the historical perspective of its formation, its reflection in Arabic and Persian sources, as well as a variety of explanations relating to appellation, see Ṣafavī, *Iskandar*, pp. 269–305; Abel, "Ḏū ʾl-Qarnayn, Prophète de l'Universalité"; Wheeler, "Moses or Alexander", and recently, Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 135–55. In an attempt to settle chronological discrepancies, medieval exegetes and historians suggested the existence of two Dhū al-Qarnayns: Dhū al-Qarnayn al-Akbar (the elder Dhū al-Qarnayn) and Dhū al-Qarnayn al-Aṣghar (the younger Dhū al-Qarnayn). The former is the one mentioned in the Qurʾān; he lived after the Prophet Ṣāliḥ and before the Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and is famous for erecting the Wall against Gog and Magog. The latter is identified with Iskandar-i Rūmī, who conquered Iran and whose counsellor was Aristotle. For exhaustive descriptions of the deeds ascribed to both figures, see Mīrkhvānd, *Tārīkh-i Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, Tehran, 1960–72, vol. I, pp. 91–95, 640–69; also *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (*Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-ʾl-mulūk*), *vol. II: Prophets and Patriarchs* (SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies. Bibliotheca Persica), trans. W.M. Brinner, Albany 1987, p. 23; *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (*Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-ʾl-mulūk*), *vol. IV: The Ancient Kingdoms* (SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies. Bibliotheca Persica), trans. M. Perlmann, Albany 1987, p. 87.

7 See, e.g., Abū Isḥāq al-Thaʿlabī, *Kitāb qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ al-musammā bi-ʾl-ʿArāʾis*, Cairo 1921–22, pp. 252–53; Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār*, ed. Ḥikmat, vol. 5, p. 735.

Magog and to the journey through Darkness including the Water of Life legend; Dhū al-Qarnayn's arrival at the extremities of the world, etc.[8]

Yet another constituent of the medieval Persian Alexander tradition was the Zoroastrian perception of Alexander; retained mainly in Zoroastrian religious texts, this perception perpetuated Alexander's negative image as arch-enemy of Iran, thus reflecting vague but painful memories of the Macedonian conquest amplified by the political agenda of the late Sasanian period.[9]

The syncretic confluence of traditions and sources sketched above is highly visible in the treatment of Alexander in the *Shāh-nāma* ("The Book of Kings") of Firdausī (ca. 940–1020).[10] While closely following a Syriac recension, the chapter on Alexander/Iskandar in the *Shāh-nāma* is at the same time saturated with Islamic motif clusters, such as Iskandar's pilgrimage to the Kaʿba, the Search for the Water of Life in the Darkness under the guidance of Khiḍr and the sinister encounter with the angel Isrāfīl, Iskandar's erection of the Wall against Gog and Magog, etc.[11] Concurrently, there are scattered allusions to Christian notions and practices: thus, Iskandar moves his army against the Persian king Dārā under the banner on which the phrase "The Devotee of the

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8 These and other themes are examined in detail in Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 155–88.

9 For an appraisal of the hostile Zoroastrian view of Alexander, including the main "accusations" found in Zoroastrian writings and their possible historical grounds, see Gignoux, "La démonisation d'Alexandre le Grand"; Wiesehöfer, "The 'Accursed' and the 'Adventurer'", pp. 124–28.

10 The *Shāh-nāma* is an epic poem depicting Iranian national history from a semi-legendary perspective, starting with the mythological creation of the First Man and ending with the historical Muslim conquest of Iran in the 7th century. Based chiefly on a New Persian version of the Middle Persian chronicle *Xᵛadāy-nāmag* (see above, note 5), the poem is organised around fifty periods of rulership of Iranian kings, Alexander/Iskandar being one of them. The scholarly literature on various aspects of this work is immense. For a brief overview of Firdausī's life and of the structure and epic character of the *Shāh-nāma*, see most recently Feuillebois-Pierunek, "L'épopée iranienne", pp. 149–72; for a summary of its contents, see Fouchécour, "Une lecture". A thorough survey of the main themes, sources and chronology of Iranian national history, pertinent to the understanding of the *Shāh-nāma* is found in Yarshater, "Iranian National History". For translations, see Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, trans. A.G. Warner and E. Warner, 9 vols., London 1905–25 (in verse); Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, trans. Banu-Lahuti et al., 6 vols., Moscow 1957–89 (in verse, in Russian); Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, trans. J. Mohl, 8 vols., Paris 1876–78 (in prose, in French); for the most recent English partial prose translation, see Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, trans. D. Davis, New York 2006.

11 See Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq and Umīdsālār, vol. 6, pp. 48–50, lines 627–61; pp. 91–95, lines 1328–1405; pp. 96–100, lines 1421–76 respectively.

Cross" (*muḥibb-i ṣalīb*) is written;[12] he marries Fighistān, the Indian king's daughter, "according to Christ's custom" (*ba-rasm-i Masīḥā*);[13] a bishop (*sukūbā*) prepares Iskandar's body for burial.[14] Taking into account Firdausī's well-known fidelity to his sources that precludes poetic licence, the Iskandar chapter in the *Shāh-nāma* seems to be based – through a New Persian intermediary – on a composite Arabic version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* which alongside the dominant Islamic character bears some Christian traces incorporated into it from a Christian Arabic translation.[15]

In addition to the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition, the *Shāh-nāma* preserves the legacy of the Zoroastrian negative attitude towards Alexander, which is most palpable in the chapters of the *Shāh-nāma* dealing with the Sasanian dynasty and its sovereigns, i.e., the chapters unrelated to the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* and based on the Middle Persian chronicle *Xᵛadāy-nāmag* as their ultimate source.[16] Thus, Iskandar is alluded to as the one who sows hostility and defiles the fortunes of Iranian kings;[17] he is described as their zealous foe (*kīna-dār-i suturg*)[18] and is mentioned in the same breath as the most bitter enemies of Iran, the tyrant foreign rulers Ḍaḥḥāk the Arab and Afrāsiyāb the Turanian (anachronistically identified as Turk) who brought calamity and disorder onto

12 Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, vol. 5, p. 533, line 54.

13 Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq and Umīdsālār, vol. 6, p. 28, line 351.

14 Ibid., p. 123, line 1822.

15 This New Persian intermediary was most probably the prose *Shāh-nāma* of Abū Manṣūr ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq, which was based on the Middle Persian *Xᵛadāy-nāmag* (see above, note 5) and served as Firdausī's main source. Alternatively, Firdausī's reliance on an independent composition in New Persian comprising the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* cannot be excluded (see Ṣafā, *Ḥamāsa-sarāyī*, pp. 546–47; Ṣafavī, *Iskandar*, pp. 78–79). As for the Arabic Christianised translation underlying Firdausī's chapter on Iskandar, its nature is difficult to establish. Traces in such an early work as the *Shāh-nāma* would, however, contradict K.F. Weymann's supposition that an Arabic version was Christianised rather late, by the compiler of the Ethiopic translation (14th–16th centuries); see Weymann, *Aethiopische und arabische Übersetzung*. Moreover, the recently discovered *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar Dhū* [sic] *al-Qarnayn* which was copied in the 17th century by Yūsuf b. ʿAṭīya (known as Quzmān) and which seems to be the *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic version (on this, see in detail Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 58–73 as well as her chapter in this volume, pp. 200–01), notwithstanding its subtle Christian background, differs too significantly from the Alexander story in the *Shāh-nāma* to imply any relation between the two.

16 See above, note 5.

17 Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, vol. 8, p. 30, line 368.

18 Ibid., p. 257, line 3361.

the Iranian kingdom with their illegitimate rule,[19] – all this in glaring contrast to Iskandar's recognition as a legitimate Iranian king in the section devoted to him.[20] Finally, the chapter on Iskandar in the *Shāh-nāma* incorporates Iskandar's letter of consolation to his mother and the funeral sayings of Greek philosophers (*ḥakīmān-i Rūm*) over his coffin,[21] which derive from the Arabic wisdom literature on Alexander.[22]

The chapter on Iskandar in the *Shāh-nāma* signified his transformation in the Persian domain into a metahistorical, semi-mythic figure that attracted to itself a host of heterogeneous cultural traditions and was receptive to additions and modifications. Firdausī's version amalgamated sources and influences which would permeate – in various ways and to different degrees – most medieval Persian texts devoted to Iskandar after Firdausī. Among these texts, considered below, are narrative poems *Iskandar-nāma* of Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī (*ca.* 1141–1209/10), *Ā'īna-yi Iskandarī* ("The Alexandrian Mirror") of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī (1253–1325) and *Khirad-nāma-yi Iskandarī* ("The Alexandrian Book of Wisdom") by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (1414–1492), as well as folk narratives in prose the *Dārāb-nāma* ("The Book of Darius") ascribed to Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī (written down probably in the 12th century) and the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma* ("The Book of Iskandar"; compiled between 12th–14th centuries). As shown below, each of the texts moulded Iskandar's character in a distinct manner, thus imparting a peculiar ambiance to the Persian Alexander tradition.

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19 Ibid., p. 64, lines 822–28; Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq and Umīdsālār, vol. 6, pp. 180–81, lines 666–69. For an examination of the negative references to Iskandar in the *Shāh-nāma*, their textual antecedents in Sasanian literature and the general historical context, see Yamanaka, "Ambiguïté". See also above, note 9.

20 It should be noted, though, that the echoes – albeit indistinct – of the negative attitude are found in the Iskandar chapter as well. These echoes comprise the episode of Iskandar's partition of Iran into small principalities at Aristotle's/Arasṭālīs's advice in order to prevent it attacking his native Rūm (= Greece; see Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq and Umīdsālār, vol. 6, pp. 116–18, lines 1719–45; for a summary of the episode's sources, see Yamanaka, "Ambiguïté", pp. 344–48) and the motif of bad breath which prompted the expulsion of Iskandar's pregnant mother by her Iranian husband (see Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, vol. 5, pp. 523–24, lines 95–106; and pp. 215–16 below).

21 See Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq and Umīdsālār, vol. 6, pp. 119–22, lines 1766–1800 and pp. 125–27, lines 1848–80 respectively.

22 See note 45 below.

The Multifaceted Iskandar

1 *An Ambiguous Heir to the Iranian Throne*

A version of the Iranian national past epitomised in Firdausī's *Shāh-nāma* ascertains the continuity of Iranian history through the sequence of rulers of Iranian descent who ascended the throne in orderly succession within the royal family and as such were invested with "divine grace" (the *farr*) and thus legitimised. In order to ensure this continuity, Alexander, the ultimate "Other" in the Sasanian tradition, was integrated in the official Iranian historical cycle through the account of his Iranian parentage, best represented by Firdausī's narrative.[23] According to the gist of this narrative, Alexander/Iskandar was born of the abruptly-ended marriage of Darius/Dārāb with Nāhīd, daughter of the Qayṣar of Rūm, Philip/Faylaqūs. During the nuptials Dārāb sensed bad breath in his newly-wed, which made her instantly repugnant to him. The result was that the ill-fated girl, already pregnant with Dārāb's offspring, was sent back to her father. To avoid disgrace to himself and his daughter, Faylaqūs adopts the new-born as his own son. At the same time, Dārāb marries another woman and gives birth to Dārā. Iskandar's half-Iranian lineage is revealed only later, during his strife with this same half-brother.[24] Although the historical version of Alexander's origin from Philip of Macedonia and his wife Olympias was well-known in Perso-Arabic historiography in Firdausī's time, the Iranian account of his descent won overwhelming popularity among early Arabic and Persian historians and men of letters and acquired an almost authoritative nature.[25]

23 For an interpretation of the reasons underlying Alexander's Iranisation along the same lines, see Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, p. 97; Southgate, "Portrait of Alexander", pp. 279–80; Gaillard (trans.), Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, p. 25.

24 See Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, vol. 5, 517–25, lines 43–125.

25 For an appraisal of an historical vs. an Iranian versions of Iskandar's descent, see Rubanovich, "Why So Many Stories?", pp. 203–07. The attempt to iranicise Alexander might have been encouraged by – or even modelled on – a much earlier endeavour to mobilise him for a national cause, as in the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* and its Syriac derivative, which present Alexander's concocted descent from Nectanebo (= Nectanebus), an Egyptian king and magician, and Queen Olympias, Philip's wife (see *The Greek Alexander Romance* I, 1–12, trans. R. Stoneman, London 1991, pp. 35–44), thus compensating for the national defeat and reinstating the conqueror's deeds in the national history. Contrary to an opinion that Muslim historians failed to convey the version of Iskandar's Egyptian descent (see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, p. 19), it was in fact in circulation in the Islamic world, on the very "margins" of Alexander-material, especially from the end of the 12th century onwards when the true significance of Iskandar's Iranian descent as a tool of the foreign conqueror's legitimisation had receded into the background,

Notwithstanding the lending of Iranian lineage to Iskandar, his status as an heir to the Iranian throne is not without ambiguity. Examined in the Zoroastrian context, the motif of the bad breath of the Macedonian princess may hint at her alienated, impure status vis-à-vis her Iranian husband.[26] While Iskandar was ultimately accepted as Iranian on account of his paternal lineage, he still remains alien on account of his mother's foreign and, therefore, impure origin.

A similar ambiguity, expressed more vehemently and explicitly, is found in a *dāstān* – folk epic romance in prose – the *Dārāb-nāma* ("The Book of Darius") ascribed to Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī and written down some time in the 12th century.[27] While reiterating the familiar story of Nāhīd's marriage to and subsequent expulsion by the Iranian king Dārāb, the *dāstān* offers a complementary account of Iskandar's birth and upbringing, distinguished by typically folkloric features. After returning home to her mother and with the time of delivery approaching, Nāhīd sets up a tent at the foot of a mountain where the sage Aristotle/Arasṭāṭālīs dwells in his hut. After giving birth to a beautiful boy, the girl, heart-broken, departs, leaving the boy in the tent. The boy is suckled by a she-goat that belongs to an old woman who lives in a nearby town. The old woman brings the boy to the sage Arasṭāṭālīs, who discerning the divine radiance (*farr-i īzadī*) emanating from the child, realises that it must be royal offspring. Arasṭāṭālīs then nurtures and educates Iskandar, teaches him all the sciences, including fortune-telling and astrology, till the boy reaches his tenth year. Iskandar's dexterity in fortune-telling and dream-interpretation makes him the talk of the town, but at the same time brings upon him troubles of every sort. After a long period of wandering, adventure and hardship Iskandar

metamorphosing into just another story (see Rubanovich, "Why So Many Stories?", pp. 205–06, 220–22).

26 See ibid., pp. 207–12. It is not incidental that in one version of the story, recorded in the *Dārāb-nāma*, after having sensed his wife's rotten breath, Dārāb performs an act of self-purification; see Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 1, p. 389. The denunciation of Iskandar's non-Iranian mother by means of an evocative motif of bad breath seems to indicate the "shift of guilt" from his figure on to that of his mother, thus revealing the reticence inherent in incorporating Iskandar into the Iranian tradition.

27 On the *dāstān* as a genre in medieval Persian literature and on its characteristics in connection with orality, see recently Rubanovich, "Orality in Medieval Persian Literature", pp. 660–75. For the *Dārāb-nāma*'s translations, see Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, trans. N.B. Kondyreva, Moscow 2000 (into Russian); Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, trans. Gaillard (partial French translation of the second part with a valuable introduction).

chances on his mother, is recognised by her and at last becomes the heir apparent of his grandfather Fīlqūs/Philip, the ruler of Rūm.[28]

Notwithstanding Iskandar's Iranian lineage on his paternal side and his own evolving self-identification as Iranian, in the *Dārāb-nāma* the purity of his genealogy is incessantly questioned by his rivals who mock him as "fatherless Rūmī" (*rūmī-yi bī-pidar*)[29] or "fatherless offspring of a Rūmī" (*rūmī-zāda-yi bī-pidar*), alluding to his Greek mother.[30] Unlike in the *Shāh-nāma*, his half-brother Dārā staunchly rejects any kinship with Iskandar, accusing him of being a bastard (*ḥarām-zāda*) and his mother – promiscuous (*nāpārsā*).[31] Iskandar's "crisis of identity" which is closely linked to his (il)legitimacy as an Iranian ruler is further reinforced by his strife with Būrāndukht, the daughter of the vanquished Dārā, who rises up to avenge her father. In the *Dārāb-nāma* Būrāndukht is clearly identified as the bearer of Iranian national sentiment and a host of allusions is established between her character and those of Iranian kings and heroes of the past.[32] However, the conflict between the Iranian and the alien constituents, sharply delineated at the beginning of Iskandar's story, soon finds unexpected resolution: surprised by Iskandar while bathing in a stream, the naked Būrāndukht marries Iskandar and elevates him to the Iranian throne.[33] From now on she zealously joins Iskandar in his prophetic mission of spreading Islam through conquests.[34]

The theme of discord between the two main characters of the *Dārāb-nāma* embodies the essential opposition between the national (local/Iranian) constituent personified in Būrāndukht and the religious (alien Rūmī/Islamic) component represented by Iskandar, which is dynamically resolved in the har-

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28 See Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 1, pp. 387–422. For an examination of the folkloric features of the story, see Rubanovich, "Why So Many Stories?", pp. 215–18; for a discussion of its variants in other medieval Persian texts, see ibid., pp. 220–24, 227–31.

29 See Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 1, pp. 498, 505.

30 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 543; vol. 2, pp. 36, 76.

31 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 441–42, 452, 459.

32 She is repeatedly referred to as the "queen of Iran" (*malika-yi Īrān* or *bānū-yi Īrān*) and "the devoted lover of the Land of Iran" (*dūstdār-i Īrān-zamīn*). See, e.g., ibid., vol. 1, p. 543; vol. 2, pp. 15, 20, 23, 24, 27, 54, 60. On the Iranianness of Būrāndukht, see also Gaillard (trans.), Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, pp. 30–31. Hanaway goes so far as to suggest that Būrāndukht might be a folk manifestation of the Zoroastrian goddess of water Anāhītā (see Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, pp. 39–54; idem, "Anāhitā and Alexander").

33 Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 2, p. 92.

34 On Iskandar as a prophet disseminating the monotheistic faith of Islam, see below.

monious fusion of the two.[35] One wonders whether the peculiar picture presented in the *Dārāb-nāma* might reflect the historically-based perception of Islamisation processes in Iran through the lens of a folk storyteller.

2 *Iskandar as a World-Conqueror: A Disenchanted Peregrinator or an Ideal Ruler?*

Iskandar's role as the ultimate world-conqueror seems uncontested in the Perso-Arabic tradition. In all narrative Persian sources the plot is built around Iskandar's movement in time and space in his quest for universal power. At the same time, notwithstanding the positive epithet *jahān-dār* ("world-possessor") widely applied to Iskandar, his standing as the universal sovereign is not without controversy in some of our texts. The dismissive stance towards Iskandar's restless pursuit of world dominion and his thirst for earthly possessions is evident, for example, in the treatment of his character in the *Shāh-nāma*. His conquests lack a sense of purpose and are driven by insatiable curiosity, turning the hero into a kind of idle peregrinator rather than a determined world-conqueror.[36] Iskandar's failure to attain immortality, which is epitomised in the famous episode of his search for the Water of Life,[37] makes him both an emblem of condemnable vanity and a symbol of man's vulnerability in the face of Destiny and God's decree. The motif of human conceit and condemnation of bloodshed comes to the fore in his encounters with Qaydāfa (Candace of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*), Queen of Andalus, and with Faghfūr, King of China.[38] Although Firdausī closely follows the episodes as they appear in the extant Syriac recension, motif after motif, his emphasis is on the concept of the ideal ruler and ideal kingship, pivotal for the *Shāh-nāma* as a whole. For Firdausī, Qaydāfa and Faghfūr exemplify the ideal sovereign: just, noble, generous, restrained in their emotional reactions, and above all, possessing the *khirad*, an inborn wisdom. Their lucid distinction between virtue and sin places them above Iskandar with his quenchless desire for conquest and riches. In her admonition of Iskandar, Qaydāfa recites the tenets that embody the model of the ideal ruler: success is not attained by a ruler's personal prowess, but is determined by the guidance of God and Destiny; he who sheds the blood of kings deserves punishment in the Fire of Hell; good deeds and generosity will earn a ruler a good name in generations to come. This is in fact a kind of "Mirror for Princes" in miniature, reflecting the ethic-moralistic standpoint of

35 See Rubanovich, *Beyond the Literary Canon*, pp. 403–07.

36 See, for example, Bertel's, "Glavnye versii", pp. 304–05.

37 See Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq and Umīdsālār, vol. 6, pp. 91–96, lines 1328–420.

38 See ibid., pp. 51–74, lines 671–1055 and pp. 106–11, lines 1551–647 respectively.

Firdausī in his monumental work. The story of Faghfūr's visit to Iskandar's camp in the guise of his own messenger, and the example of munificence and humility he gives to Iskandar, provide a kind of a mirror-episode to the Qaydāfa tale. The didactic import of their encounter differs little from the moral lesson taught Iskandar by the noble Queen. These episodes, in addition to his visit to the Brahmans,[39] act as the turning points in Iskandar's education: he is taught that immortality is to be found neither in world conquest nor in the quest for universal power, but in the good name which a ruler bequeaths when he departs for the other world and which is earned by just and benevolent deeds alone. In the *Shāh-nāma* Iskandar, disenchanted in his war prowess and in his striving for world dominion, treads the path towards self-recognition and understanding the essence of a perfect king.[40]

A substantially different treatment of Iskandar's figure is given in the *Sharaf-nāma* ("The Book of Glory") of Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī, which comprises the first part of his diptich *Iskandar-nāma*.[41] The disenchanted peregrinator of Firdausī is transformed into an accomplished conqueror, unaffected by an Iranian sensibility.[42] His conquests, however, are propelled by the urge to bring justice to the oppressed rather than by the ultimate goal of dominating the world.[43] Moreover, Iskandar's positive representation in the *Sharaf-nāma* is

39 See Firdausī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, vol. 4, pp. 740–78, lines 1056–133.

40 These aspects of Iskandar's representation in the *Shāh-nāma* are examined in Kappler, "Alexandre dans le *Shāh Nāma* de Firdousi", esp. pp. 173–82; eadem, "Le roi 'au cœur éveillé'; eadem, "Alexandre et les merveilles".

41 The poem consists of two parts: the above-mentioned *Sharaf-nāma* (composed after 1188) and the *Iqbāl-nāma* ("The Book of Fortune") which is discussed below. The dating of the poem is problematic, the whole being completed probably in 1194. For a detailed discussion of the poem's dating and dedicatees, see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, pp. 441–46; idem, "*Eskandar-nāma* of Nežāmī", pp. 612–13. On Niẓāmī and his works, see Bertel's, "Niẓāmī". For the *Iskandar-nāma*'s translations, see Nizami, *Das Alexanderbuch*, Iskandarname, trans. J.Ch. Bürgel (Manesse Bibliothek der Weltliteratur), Zürich 1991 (in prose); Nizami Gyandzhevi, *Iskender-name*, trans. K. Lipskerov, *Sobranie sochineniy v pyati tomakh*, vol. 5, Moscow 1986 (in verse); the *Sharaf-nāma* is translated into English (see Nizami, *The Sikandar Nama, e Bara,* trans. H.W. Clarke, reprint, Delhi 1995), the *Iqbāl-nāma* into Italian (see Nezamî di Ganjè, *Il libro della fortuna di Alessandro*, trans. C. Saccone, Milan 1997).

42 Niẓāmī prefers the historical version of Iskandar's origin from Fīlqūs/Philip, labelling all other accounts "nonsensical talk". For the poet's treatment of Iskandar's birth, see Rubanovich, "Why So Many Stories?", pp. 212–15.

43 Thus, Iskandar's campaign against Dārā is motivated by his desire to relieve his own people of the burden of taxes paid to the Iranian king, who is depicted as arrogant and unwise (see Niẓāmī, *Sharaf-nāma*, ed. B. Tharvatiyān, Tehran 1989, pp. 179–85, esp. pp. 182–83,

not marred by the episodes which have their source in Firdausī's unfavourable accounts, i.e., Iskandar's encounters with Queen Nūshāba (corresponding to Firdausī's Qaydāfa) and with the Khāqān of China (corresponding to Firdausī's Faghfūr). While possessing unflattering undertones in Firdausī's version, these episodes in the *Sharaf-nāma* are mitigated by Iskandar's expressions of magnanimity, losing much of their didactic import.[44] In the same manner, Iskandar's attempt to find the Water of Life is not perceived as a failure or a sign of vanity in view of the hero's gradual development from world conqueror to philosopher-king guided by sages, and ultimately, a prophet of monotheism (see below). Whereas Firdausī accentuates Iskandar's imperfections to enable him (and the reader) to understand the nature of the perfect ruler, Niẓāmī unhesitatingly portrays Iskandar as such, emphasising his concern with fighting injustice and bringing prosperity to his subjects – dimensions typically required of the ideal ruler according to medieval Perso-Muslim concepts of kingship.

3 *Iskandar as Philosopher-King and Prophet*

The perception of Iskandar as philosopher-king is rooted in early Arabic sources, such as the *Epistolary Romance* which includes correspondence between Alexander and Aristotle, the *ḥikam* tradition of wise maxims and anecdotes ascribed to Iskandar, and the funerary sentences of philosophers uttered during his interment.[45] In medieval Persian literature, however, *ḥikam* collections have not gained the same popularity and the view of Iskandar as philosopher-king is best reflected in large narrative forms. The most important representation of this kind is found in the *Iqbāl-nāma*, the second part of Niẓāmī's *Iskandar-nāma*. Whereas the first part of the diptich, the

lines 68–75); his conquest of Egypt is launched after the locals asked for his help in liberating them from the oppression of the Zangīs (roughly identified with Ethiopians; see ibid., pp. 131–32); his subjugation of the Derbend fortress is aimed at eliminating the robbers who attack passing caravans (see ibid., pp. 329–38).

44 For Niẓāmī's treatment of the Nūshāba episode, see Rubanovich, "Re-writing the Episode of Alexander and Candace", pp. 132–34, 139–40. Significantly, Qaydāfa's accusations that Iskandar is not averse to bloodshed are counteracted in Niẓāmī's portrayal of the hero citing examples of his disposition to nonviolence, even towards his foes. On this, see Bürgel, "Conquérant", pp. 66–70; idem, "Krieg und Frieden"; idem, "Nonviolence", esp. pp. 77–79.

45 For a survey of the Arabic wisdom literature as a significant component of the Arabic Alexander tradition, see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 93–133, especially pp. 102–20, 123–28. See also Bertel's, "Glavnye versii", pp. 306–14. For it as a source of medieval European Alexander tradition, see Doufikar-Aerts, "Influences arabes".

Sharaf-nāma, is plotted around Iskandar's campaigns across the world, the *Iqbāl-nāma* is loosely structured around diverse self-sustaining tales and parables, each demonstrating some moral-ethical or philosophical issues.[46] In these tales Niẓāmī draws on concepts prevalent during his time, when occult sciences – among them alchemy, astrology and magic, – medicine and music were considered part and parcel of the philosophical stock.[47] The tales are followed by Iskandar's dispute with the Indian sage (*ḥakīm*) and by a philosophical discussion on the origins of the universe among Iskandar and the seven philosophers – Arasṭū (Aristotle), Vālīs (Thales), Balīnās (Apollonius of Tyana), Suqrāṭ (Socrates), Farfūriyūs (Porphyry), Hirmis (Hermes Trismegistus), and Aflaṭūn (Plato).[48] Significantly, contrary to Iskandar's representation in the *Shāh-nāma* as seeking wisdom and advice from others, in the *Iqbāl-nāma* he supersedes his companions in sagacity and philosophical discernment, serving as the focal point (*nuqṭa-gāh*) of their circle. In accordance with Niẓāmī's dynamic conception of his hero, after having achieved perfection in philosophical knowledge, Iskandar moves to the ultimate stage of development, that of the monotheistic prophet.[49]

While following Iskandar's identification with the Qurʾanic Dhū al-Qarnayn, Niẓāmī expands and transforms the conventional framework of the Dhū al-Qarnayn narrative.[50] Thus, Iskandar goes on his mission equipped with the philosophical knowledge described in the three Books of Wisdom (*khirad-nāma*) presented to him by Aristotle, Plato and Socrates.[51] Contrary to usual depictions of Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn as converting infidels by the sword (see below), Niẓāmī's hero is peaceful and tolerant, and his missionary activity is

46 See Niẓāmī, *Iqbāl-nāma*, ed. Tharvatiyān, pp. 73–123.

47 No comprehensive research has yet been done on the possible sources and import of Niẓāmī's philosophical tales as a whole. The first steps in this direction were made by J.Ch. Bürgel; see Bürgel, "Geheimwissenschaften"; idem, "Occult Sciences"; idem, "Wettstreit"; idem, "Conquérant", pp. 71–72; idem, "On Some Sources of Nizāmī's *Iskandarnāma*", pp. 24–30.

48 See Niẓāmī, *Iqbāl-nāma*, ed. Tharvatiyān, pp. 123–41.

49 Ibid., pp. 141–46. Niẓāmī's triad of "conqueror – philosopher – prophet" seems to betray his acquaintance with the political philosophy of al-Fārābī (d. 950); see Bürgel, "Conquérant", p. 66; idem, "L'attitude d'Alexandre", pp. 54–55.

50 See pp. 211–12 above.

51 See Niẓāmī, *Iqbāl-nāma*, ed. Tharvatiyān, pp. 147–62. Niẓāmī's preoccupation with Greek philosophy and philosophers in the *Iqbāl-nāma* appears to reflect his favourable stance towards the latter and should be appraised against the backdrop of historical tensions between theological orthodoxy and certain philosophical strands in Islam during the poet's time. See Bürgel, "L'attitude d'Alexandre", pp. 53–56.

not emphasised.[52] Finally, as a result of his encounter with an ideal community where no ruler or governmental institutions exist, where people are prosperous, just and equal, Iskandar abandons his prophetic mission as redundant.[53] Niẓāmī's triple and dynamic concept of the hero, depicting his gradual evolution from world conqueror to philosopher-king to monotheistic prophet who admits the possibility of a community self-guided by sacred knowledge without a need for a ruler or a prophet, is singular, insofar as Iskandar's portrayal in the Perso-Arabic domain is concerned.

Indeed, the two later poems, *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī* of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī (completed in 1299–1300) and *Khirad-nāma-yi Iskandarī* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (completed *ca.* 1485),[54] although written in response to Niẓāmī's *Iskandar-nāma*, offer a static image of Iskandar as an ideal ruler and differ in their approach to his representation as a philosopher-king and prophet. The differences can in part be attributed to the desire of the two poets not to repeat their predecessor who, in Amīr Khusrau's expression, "took the filtered (i.e. clear) wine [of Iskandar's story] and left the sediment to us".[55] Amīr Khusrau thus omits most of the stories related by Niẓāmī, providing his own versions of those which he keeps.[56] Moreover, he polemicises with his predecessor on Iskandar's prophetic status, stating that according to his inquiries (*taḥqīq*), Iskandar was not a prophet (*payghambar*), but a person invested with sanctity

52 Bürgel, "Conquérant", pp. 73–74, and note 44 above.

53 See Niẓāmī, *Iqbāl-nāma*, ed. Tharvatiyān, pp. 209–13, lines 95–175, esp. lines 167, 168, and 170: "'Had I seen this people earlier, / I wouldn't have circumvented the world. // I would have sit in a corner of some mountain / worshipping God.' // When [Iskandar] saw (those people's) religion and devotion, / he renounced completely [his] prophethood". The gist of the episode is given in Bertel's, "Glavnye versii", p. 334; Bürgel, "Conquérant", pp. 74–76; Casari, "Alessandro", pp. 31–33. For examination of the episode of the Perfect City in terms of a utopian society and terrestrial paradise and for possible sources and parallels, see Bertotti, "Vedute di Città Perfette"; Casari, "Alessandro", pp. 34–43; idem, "Un lieu de traduction", pp. 389–93.

54 On Amīr Khusrau and his works, see Schimmel, "Amīr Ḵosrow Dehlawī"; on the sources of the *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī*, see Piemontese, "Sources and Art"; for the poem's translation, see Amir Khusrau, *Lo Specchio Alessandrino*, trans. A.M. Piemontese (Medioevo romanzo e orientale. Testi, 5), Soveria Mannelli 1999. On Jāmī's life and works, see Bertel's, "Dzhami"; Losensky, "Jāmi".

55 Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī, *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī*, ed. Mīrsayyidūf, p. 26, line 388.

56 See, for example, the extensive account of Iskandar's war against the Khāqān of China, which, according to Amīr Khusrau, is based on what he read in chronicles other than those used by Niẓāmī (Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī, *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī*, ed. Mīrsayyidūf, pp. 47–106, esp. pp. 47–48, lines 697–701). For a summary of the contents, see Bertel's, "Glavnye versii", pp. 336–49.

(*vilāyat*) and granted the powers of discovery and miraculous deeds (*kashf-u karāmāt*).[57] In this manner, the Iskandar of Amīr Khusrau is first and foremost an explorer and an inventor.[58] As for the philosophical facet of the poem, Amīr Khusrau's hero is interested in philosophical knowledge of a practical, utilitarian kind which could be applied to inventions. Ancient philosophy as a tool for independent thinking and reasoning is condemned and its followers are doomed to death.[59] Amīr Khusrau introduces into his *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī* a lengthy episode involving Iskandar's struggle with the Greek philosophers who declined his call to convert to the true religion on the basis of their predilection for the "light of the reason" (*nūr-i khirad*) at the expense of revelation brought by messengers (*firistādagān*), i.e. prophets.[60] The Greeks fight valiantly against Iskandar, but are finally vanquished when their land is flooded as a result of Iskandar's ruse, only three emerging alive – Falāṭūn/Plato, GHRQĪL (Heraclite?) and Farfīlqūs (Porphyry? or Paraclete?).[61] Of the three, Plato consents to Iskandar's request to counsel him on his voyages.[62]

While in the *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī* philosophy is clearly contraposed to Islamic faith and religion, and the view of Iskandar as philosopher-king is not promoted, the *Khirad-nāma-yi Iskandarī* of Jāmī offers – at first sight – a picture of Iskandar that is much closer to the one created by Niẓāmī. Iskandar's nature as an ideal ruler is determined by the fact that he is chosen by the people to rule over them after his father's death.[63] Jāmī surrounds his protagonist with Greek philosophers who teach, guide and counsel him from childhood to death. Their wise advice come in the form of seven *khirad-nāma*s, "books of wisdom", which are clearly modelled on the three *khirad-nāma*s in Niẓāmī's *Iqbāl-nāma*.[64] At the same time, their contents have nothing to do with Greek

57 Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī, *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī*, ed. Mīrsayyidūf, pp. 27–28, lines 406–10.

58 Conspicuous examples of Iskandar's inquisitive character are the invention of astrolabe by Arasṭū/Aristotle under his guidance (see Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī, *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī*, ed. Mīrsayyidūf, pp. 154–56) and his exploration of the ocean (see ibid., pp. 237–76). The latter episode is examined in detail in Piemontese, "Le submersile Alexandrin"; Casari, "The King Explorer", pp. 191–99.

59 For the poet's invective, see Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī, *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī*, ed. Mīrsayyidūf, pp. 178–81.

60 Ibid., p. 185.

61 Ibid., pp. 182–96. See also Bürgel, "L'attitude d'Alexandre", pp. 56–57.

62 It seems that in this work Plato and Aristotle are dissociated from the bulk of Greek philosophers – a particular, which needs further inquiry.

63 See Bertel's, "Glavnye versii", pp. 353–54.

64 In addition to Aristotle, Socrates and Plato in Niẓāmī's version, Jāmī includes the advice of Pythagoras, Hermes, Hippocrates and Asclepius, promoting the latter to the status of philosopher.

philosophy; instead, Jāmī employs them to unfold Sufi tenets and ideals, typical of the rest of his poetic legacy.[65] Due to the attenuated narrative, which gives way to a collection of wisdom precepts of the *ḥikam* type, the distinct traits of Iskandar's character are impossible to determine: he serves as mouthpiece for Jāmī's ethical and ascetic concepts.

A fascinating development of the theme of Iskandar's prophethood is offered by two medieval folk romances in prose, whose peculiar treatment of his character is described in a separate discussion below.

4 *Iskandar through the Lens of Folk Tradition*

Two medieval Alexander romances in prose (*dāstān*s) have come down to us, which have firm roots in the oral storytelling tradition.[66] One is the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma* ("The Book of Alexander") written down probably in the 12th century and redacted in the 14th century.[67] The other is the *Dārāb-nāma* mentioned above,[68] which can be divided into two parts: the first telling the story of Iskandar's father Dārāb, hence its title, while the second deals with Iskandar *per se*. At first approximation, these romances furnish a portrayal of Iskandar as known from the *Shāh-nāma* of Firdausī and especially from the *Iskandar-nāma* of Niẓāmī: a pious and just king of Iranian lineage, a prophet, whose circumvention of the world is propelled by a divine mission to fight idolatry and spread the "true faith" (*dīn-i ḥaqq*), i.e. Islam. At the same time, a close reading reveals that whereas the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma* partially follows the outline of the Iskandar chapter in Firdausī's epic and the *Dārāb-nāma* demonstrates some motif affinities with that of Niẓāmī, the similarities are superficial at most and the treatment of Iskandar in the two *dāstān*s presents a highly idiosyncratic picture, incongruous with his portrayal in the epic poems.

In the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma* Iskandar is represented first and foremost as *ghāzī*, a religious warrior, annihilating or converting infidels and sacrificing the principles of just rule for the religious cause.[69] His actions are

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65 On this, see Bertel's, "Glavnye versii", p. 362; Feuillebois-Pierunek, "Les figures d'Alexandre", pp. 196–97.

66 On the genre, see note 27 above.

67 For the stages of its composition and redaction, see Rubanovich, "Reconstruction of a Storytelling Event"; for its partial translation, see *Iskandarnamah. A Persian Medieval Alexander Romance*, trans. M.S. Southgate (Persian Heritage Series, No. 31), New York 1978.

68 See note 27 above.

69 See *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Afshār, p. 70: "Religion (faith) is above kingdom and kingship" (*dīn bālātar az mulk-u pādshāhī*). The narrator seems to be conscious of the polemics around the prophetic status of Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn and backs his prophethood

prompted by "divine inspiration" (*ilhām-i rabbānī*), and he is assisted by an angel who guides him in his mission. Correspondingly, the figure of Aristotle/Arasṭāṭālīs is stripped of any philosophical significance and reduced to the king's vizier, slavishly executing his orders. Iskandar's holy war justifies all means – "The faith and Islam will cover up for all the wrong-doings"[70] – and is the only way to gain absolution from sin and earn God's benevolence. Thus, the ethical-moral aspect of nonviolence pivotal to Iskandar's representation by Firdausī and Niẓāmī does not exercise any influence in the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma* and gives way to the precedence of sacred war (*jihād* or *ghazā*) as the proper religious conduct of a ruler.[71] This simplified view seems to be linked to the *Iskandar-nāma*'s origins in a popular strain within Islamic exegetical literature, embodied in the genre of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* ("The Tales of the Prophets") and Qur'anic commentaries (*tafsīr*) of a more folk variety.[72]

With the emphasis on Iskandar's religious zeal, the attributes of the ideal ruler advocated in the *Shāh-nāma* and the *Iskandar-nāma* of Niẓāmī, as well as in the poems of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī and Jāmī – magnanimity, generosity, righteousness, modesty and moderation – seem to lose their relevance. The Iskandar of this folk romance is a trickster whose cunning (*makr*) and ruses (*ḥīla*) are described positively by the narrator;[73] his greediness is not condemned; he is far from brave constantly turning for help to his fairy wife, the

indirectly, through comparison with such incontestable prophetic figures as Moses, Daniel and particularly Solomon (on the explicit analogy between Solomon/Sulaymān and Iskandar, see below, pp. 226–27).

70 *īmān va islām hama-yi badīhā bipūshānad*; see *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Afshār, p. 616.

71 For a discussion of violence as a key-feature in the character of Iskandar in the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma*, see Rubanovich, *Beyond the Literary Canon*, pp. 310–11, 340–44. For emphasis on nonviolence in the treatment of the character by Firdausī and Niẓāmī, see above. An interesting, if unconvincing, attempt to provide an historical background to Iskandar's depiction as *ghāzī* as reflecting the military religious campaigns of Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 998–1030), is made by Venetis, *Persian Prose Alexander Romance*, pp. 81–110.

72 For an analysis of the sources of the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma*, see Rubanovich, *Beyond the Literary Canon*, pp. 115–30, 157–63.

73 See, for instance, *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Afshār, pp. 16–18, 58–78, 244–45. The manifestations of Alexander/Iskandar as trickster are found already in the Greek *Alexander Romance* (for discussion, see Stoneman, "From History to Fiction", pp. 123–24, 126) as well as in early Islamic historiography, where Iskandar is described as "a sly and cunning man" (*mard-ī muḥtāl-u gurbuz*; see Abū al-Faḍl Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-i Masʿūdī*, ed. S. Nafīsī, 3 vols., Tehran 1940–53, vol. 1, p. 101). The positive view of a crafty ruler in the *Iskandar-nāma* may possibly reflect the concept of the political usefulness of intrigue and ruse in Islamic statesmanship (see Ignatenko, "Intriga", esp. pp. 110–11).

mighty warrior Arāqīt. The most singular feature of this narrative, however, is Iskandar's peculiar relationships with women. In sharp contrast with Iskandar's typical representation in Islamic sources as reserved and even practising sexual abstinence,[74] the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma* is replete with blunt references as to Iskandar's sensual nature and to his virility, depicting him as "voluptuous and extremely lustful for women".[75] Pondering this development, W. Hanaway suggests considering it as a projection on the portrayal of Iskandar of "…a perennially comic figure, that of the man with multiple wives and all the attendant problems", connecting it to "the conflict inherent in the male-dominated, female secluding society of medieval Iran…".[76] The sensual facet of Iskandar's character in the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma*, however, possesses a clearly positive overtone, being granted a dual "authorisation" by the narrator. The first is based on royal governance: in his capacity as powerful king, Iskandar should be able to provide the needs of his harem readily and equally, for "the kings have no choice in this matter",[77] while his might is actually appraised according to the number of daughters of subdued kings found in his seraglio.[78] The second type of "authorisation" is of a theological nature and dovetails with the origins of the *Iskandar-nāma* in popular exegetic literature; it is best expressed in the character's own words: "Since I grew up and became a man, I married seventy two women. They were all virgins. And in the writings of the prophets (*kutub-i payghambarān*), Peace be upon Them, the God Almighty commanded: 'Marry virgins so that your household would remain flourishing and prosperous!'"[79] Furthermore, close examination of the text reveals that Iskandar's representation in the *Iskandar-nāma* is modelled on the figure of the prophet Solomon/Sulaymān. The basis of such a representation is provided by a set of distinct traits common to Iskandar and Sulaymān in exegetical

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74 See, for example, ʿUnṣur al-Maʿālī Kay Kāvūs, *Qābūs-nāma*, ed. Ḡ.-Ḥ. Yūsufī, Tehran 1996, p. 130; Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk also known as Siyāsat-nāma of Nizam al-Mulk*, ed. H. Darke, Tehran 1962, p. 229; Abū al-Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī, *Taʾrīkh ghurar akhbār mulūk al-Furs wa siyyarihim*, ed. and trans. H. Zotenberg, Tehran 1963 [Or. publ. Paris, 1900], pp. 413, 430. For Alexander's characterisation as one who "abstained from women" (*kāna zāhidan fī-ʾl-nisāʾ*), see ibid., p. 443.

75 See *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Afshār, p. 309.

76 Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, p. 126.

77 *va pādshāhān-rā az īn chāra nabāshad*; see *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Afshār, p. 407.

78 See ibid., p. 757.

79 See ibid., p. 154. For additional manifestations of the same thematic strand, see Rubanovich, *Beyond the Literary Canon*, pp. 313–17. On the benefits of polygamy and regular sexual intercourse for a Muslim believer as reflected in Islamic theological writings, see Bürgel, "Love, Lust and Longing", pp. 86–87.

literature, resulting in the perception of the two as homologous figures.[80] Iskandar's relationship with women is one of the thematic foci that correlate with Sulaymān's *vita*. Sulaymān's image as a prodigious lover is well attested in various Islamic sources, which not only specify the vast number of wives and concubines, but also depict his unusual sexual prowess, linking it to his military prowess in the holy war against the infidel.[81] Moreover, Arāqīt, the principal woman character in the *Iskandar-nāma*, appears to be based on Queen Bilqīs, Sulaymān's famous spouse. Their resemblance is manifest not only in their mixed – half-human, half-demonic – origin (Arāqīt was born of a human mother and a demonic father, "exactly like Bilqīs", as the narrator claims[82]), but also in their analogous roles in the face of the male authority of their counterparts. Despite their valiant efforts to retain their independence as sovereign queens and as women, they have to accept male domination on both planes – political and personal. For Muslim exegetes emphasis on the virile facet of Sulaymān's character served as additional confirmation of his power and authority as a universal ruler. Exactly the same aspect is highlighted by the narrator of the *Iskandar-nāma* in his summary of Iskandar's exploits: "There appeared Iskandar, who conquered the whole world, vanquished all the rulers, subjugated them all, laid the world under tribute, wedded daughters of every ruler, and made Arāqīt renounce her kingdom for his sake…".[83] The idiosyncratic relationship of Iskandar with women, which, for a modern reader might convey an impression of "profound cultural irony",[84] in fact involved no irony on the part of the narrator who followed closely the prototypical pattern of Prophet Sulaymān.

In the *Dārāb-nāma* the character of Iskandar is no less perplexing. Apart from the problematic nature of his status as an Iranian king discussed above, Iskandar is depicted in a conspicuously non-heroic fashion: he is indecisive, timid and almost cowardly, heavily reliant on the military aid of his wife Būrāndukht.[85] Although as a youth Iskandar is taught all knowledge (*hunarhā*)

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80 The specific ways in which the parallelism between Iskandar and Sulaymān is manifested in the anonymous *Iskandar-nāma* are elaborated in Rubanovich, *Beyond the Literary Canon*, pp. 364–87.

81 See, e.g., Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār*, ed. Ḥikmat, vol. 7, p. 191; Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-ʾl-nihāya*, ed. ʿA. Shīrī, 8 vols., Beirut 1992–93, vol. 2, pp. 35–36; *Tarjuma-yi Tafsīr-i Ṭabarī*, ed. Ḥ. Yaghmāʾī, 7 vols., Tehran 1960–89, vol. 5, pp. 1229–30.

82 See *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Afshār, p. 364.

83 Ibid., p. 757.

84 Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, p. 128.

85 For examples, see Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 1, pp. 398, 424, 433–34, 479, vol. 2, p. 479. See also Gaillard (trans.), Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, p. 15.

by Arasṭāṭālīs and becomes accomplished in the arts, medicine, astrology, physiognomy, dream-interpreting, geometry and philosophy, later on, as a result of a heated argument between them, the acquired knowledge eludes Iskandar. Since that time, we are told, he is unable either to read a letter or interpret a dream, becoming an ignoramus (*chunān shud ki mardum-i nādān*).[86] From that moment on, Iskandar is no better than an unwitting commoner (*ʿāmmī*), dependent on the advice of Greek and Indian sages who accompany him in his voyages. Moreover, in contrast to the traditional representations of Iskandar as a universal ruler in Perso-Islamic literature, including the works discussed above, in the *Dārāb-nāma* he is not interested in exercising political sway over the Universe; he is indifferent towards symbols of power and at a certain point in his voyages even repudiates his kingship in favour of Būrāndukht.[87] This highly unusual representation led scholars to interpret Iskandar almost as an "anti-hero" and to emphasise the positive role of Būrāndukht as the real hero of the romance, explaining such peculiar treatment as a vestige of the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian tradition, overtly hostile to Alexander.[88]

This interpretation of Iskandar's character, however, tallies neither with the narrator's view which invites the audience to look at Iskandar's life and follow the example of "this just king",[89] nor with the positive description of his prophetic status as "a teacher of the God's religion", i.e. Islam.[90] Iskandar's prophethood provides a proper context for understanding his ostensible ineptitude. The episode of the loss of Iskandar's acquired knowledge can best be interpreted in terms of his initiation into prophetic status. In order to become the perfect tool for exercising God's will, Iskandar is deprived of his own volition and independence embodied in the acquired skills which had rendered him self-sufficient. He is humbled and becomes an empty vessel, ready to take in and convey the prophetic message.[91] Iskandar's transformation into an ignoramus seems to parallel the concept of *ummī*, "illiterate", linked to the Prophet Muḥammad. Muḥammad's illiteracy, i.e., his want of any other knowl-

86 See Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 1, p. 447. For the entire episode, see ibid., pp. 442–49.

87 See ibid., vol. 2, p. 93; also pp. 239, 336, 521.

88 See Gaillard (trans.), Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, pp. 14, 23–29; eadem, "Alexandre"; Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, pp. 118, 126–27.

89 *dar ḥāl-i Iskandar naẓar-ī kun va az ān pādshāh-i ʿādil ʿibrat-ī gīr*; Abū Ṭāhir-i Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 2, p. 579.

90 See ibid., p. 356.

91 See Rubanovich, *Beyond the Literary Canon*, pp. 394–98.

edge besides that of God, makes him susceptible to God's message.[92] In the same way, Iskandar's renunciation of worldly power in favour of his Iranian wife should be interpreted as yet another step in the realisation of his prophethood: indeed, only after having relinquished the throne, does Iskandar embark on his prophetic mission around the world.

Conclusion

Medieval Persian literature has enriched the Alexander tradition with multifarious accounts, from which Alexander emerges as a complex and polyvalent figure. The poems of Firdausī, Niẓāmī, Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī and Jāmī highlight – each in their own way and form – ethical-didactic precepts relevant to their time. With folk prose romances one enters the realm of popular religiosity with its leaning towards syncretism and the harmonisation of heterogeneous, and at times not easily reconcilable, elements. The dual tendency to iranicise and islamicise the hero, thus elevating him to the status of pious Iranian king permeated by religious zeal, reflects a conception of Iskandar anchored in folk storytelling on the one hand and in popular religious literature with its loose exegetical techniques on the other. Consequently the epic and philosophical aspects that underlie the poetic versions of the *Alexander Romance* are pushed into the background, deemed irrelevant to the worldview propagated by the romances through the character of Iskandar. Taken as a whole, the Persian medieval Alexander tradition lends the tale of Alexander its peculiar flavour providing modern readers and scholars alike with an opportunity to approach the creative imagination of medieval poets and folk storytellers.

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92 See Geoffroy, "Ummī".

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CHAPTER 9

Tales of the Trojan War: Achilles and Paris in Medieval Greek Literature

Renata Lavagnini

In Greek fictional literature in the vernacular, the long and illustrious Homeric tradition is mainly represented by two works. The first and long-time neglected text, the so-called *Byzantine Iliad,* was first published in 1975 from a 16th-century manuscript.[1] As we will see in more detail below, the author modelled the Trojan material according to the patterns of the Palaiologan vernacular romances, of which it seems to be a belated epigone. Thus, the reader will be surprised to find such a major deformation of the heroic myth of Troy precisely in the milieu of that Greek world in which it had come into being. In this respect, the Homeric characteristics of the main protagonist, Paris, can hardly be recognized.

Even more distant from the ancient model is Achilles, the protagonist of the second text I will deal with, namely the *Achilleid*, which actually presents all the features of a typical romance of love, and only harks back to the Trojan War and its heroes in the title. However, it makes sense to read these two works within the Byzantine Homeric tradition, in order to better evaluate on the one hand the kind of distortion the Homeric material was given and, on the other, to identify the pathway it followed in its dissemination through the medieval world, both East and West.

Homer's Ancient and Early Byzantine Readings

Already in the ancient period, there were, alongside the *Iliad*, cyclical poems that endeavoured to explain the events leading up to the Trojan War and its aftermath. Later on, the Homeric material was elaborated by the tragedians and taken up in the Hellenistic age by mythographers. Subsequently, in the first centuries of our era, it was reorganized in romance form thanks to two works that have come down to us in later Latin versions, the *Ephemerides of the*

1 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. suppl. gr. 926, ed. Nørgaard/Smith, *A Byzantine Iliad*.

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Trojan War by Dictys Cretensis and the *History of the Destruction of Troy* by Dares Phrygius.[2] Dictys' text was based on a Greek original, some papyri fragments of which have been found,[3] Dares' work is also likely to be based on an existing Greek text; neither, however, is extant. Both works are presented as being eyewitness accounts of the events: Dictys, a Cretan soldier who had participated in the Trojan War, allegedly wrote a diary in six volumes in Phoenician characters, which was translated into Latin at the time of Nero (54–68 AD), allegedly by a certain Lucius Septimius. Dares in turn, according to what the introductory letter – falsely attributed to Cornelius Nepos – maintains, was a Trojan, who also directly participated in the events. The two works make a common claim to provide a more truthful and complete narration of the vicissitudes of the Trojan War than the Homeric account, which is steeped in myth and legend. Both Dares' and Dictys' compilations actually go back to the time of the Second Sophistic (1st-early 3rd century AD). They reflect the need for the rationalization of myth already felt in ancient times, and are to be set in the historiographic debate that was ongoing in the age of Lucian, since they both show the tendency today defined as "pseudo-documentarism". That is to say, they belong to a category of texts which base their authoritativeness on fictitious sources, but which claim to be true.[4]

Dictys' and Dares' works were incorporated into narrations of universal history offered by medieval chronicles; they were deemed useful for the narrative and detailed reconstruction of events for which the Homeric text alone, with

2 Ed. W. Eisenhut, *Dictys Cretensis Ephemeridos belli troiani libri a Lucio Septimio in latinum sermonem translati. Accedunt papyri Dictys Graeci in Aegypto inventa*, Leipzig 1973 and ed. F. Meister, *Daretis Phrygii de excidio Troiae Historia*, Lipsiae 1873 respectively. Both texts have recently been republished with an Italian translation and ample introduction by E. Lelli, *Ditti di Creta, l'altra Iliade. Il diario di guerra di un soldato greco. Con la Storia della distruzione di Troia di Darete Frigio e i testi bizantini sulla guerra troiana. Testi greci e latini a fronte*, Milan 2015. A new edition of Dares' text is provided by G. Garbuglino, *La storia della distruzione di Troia*, Alessandria 2011. An English translation of both works is in R.M. Frazer Jr, *The Trojan War. The Chronicle of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian translated*, Bloomington, Indiana 1966. – A useful study, especially on the fortune of the Trojan legends in Italy, is Prosperi, *Omero sconfitto*. D'Agostino's work *Le gocce d'acqua*, in addition to a study on the fortune of Dictys and Dares in the romance sphere, also provides a large anthology of Latin, French, Ibero-Romance and Italian texts.

3 Tebtunis Papyri II, 268, *ante* 250 AD; P.Oxy.XXXI 1966, pp. 45–48 (late 2nd-early 3rd century AD); P.Oxy LXXII, 4943–4944.

4 Hansen, *Strategies of Authentication* p. 302. On the issue of fictionality vs historiographic truth in Byzantium, see Lassithiotakis, "Παύσασθε γράφειν Ὅμηρον"; Agapitos /Mortensen, *Medieval Narratives between History and Fiction*, particularly the long article by Agapitos, "In Rhomaian, Persian and Frankish Lands", pp. 235–367.

its legendary characteristics, did not provide sufficient and reliable elements.[5] Thus, the two texts on one side constitute the point of confluence of a long tradition starting from Homer, and on the other they are to be seen as the point of departure of an awfully successful genre, in both East and West, which was only to be surpassed by that of the *Alexander Romance*.[6]

As regards the Byzantine East, already in the 6th century John Malalas, a Greek of Syrian origin, incorporated the Trojan legends into his *Chronicle*, taking them directly from the Greek Dictys.[7] Malalas writes in a Greek rich in vernacular expressions and addresses a vast and not very educated readership; with him the story of the Trojan vicissitudes already takes on a novelistic colour. A clear example of this can be found in the passage where Paris falls in love with Helen, seeing her walking in a garden:[8]

> While Menelaos was staying in Creta … it happened that Helen came down into her palace garden to take a walk with Aithra, Menelaos' relative …Paris looked out into the garden and noticed Helen's beauty and youth. Falling in love with her, he seduced her with the aid of Aithra … He took her and fled in the ships he had with him from Troy.[9]

Homer's Students and Scholars in 12th-century Byzantium

In 12th-century Byzantium, Homeric studies flourished. While the bishop of Thessalonica Eustathios wrote a monumental commentary on the *Iliad*,[10] the

5 For a useful overview of the Homeric tradition in Byzantine Literature see Browning, *Homer in Byzantium*: Jeffreys, "The Judgement of Paris"; Lavagnini, "Storie troiane"; Nilsson, "From Homer to Hermoniakos".

6 Cf. Lavagnini, *Storie troiane* p. 49. On the multifarious avatars of the *Alexander Romance* in Byzantine literature, see the chapter by U. Moennig in this volume.

7 On the relations between these texts see Patzig, "The Hypothesis", pp. 423–30; Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 29–30.

8 John Malalas, *Chronicle*, ed. Thurn, p. 69, lines 72–80: Ἐν τῷ δὲ διάγειν τὸν Μενέλαον ἐπὶ τὴν Κρήτην θυσιάζοντα Διὶ Ἀστερίῳ καὶ τῇ Εὐρώπῃ ἐν τῇ Γορτύνῃ πόλει συνέβη τὴν Ἑλένην κατελθεῖν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ παλατίου αὐτῆς εἰς τὸ εὡρισθῆναι μετὰ τῆς Αἴθρας τῆς συγγενίδος τοῦ Μενελάου […] ὁ δὲ Πάρις παρακύψας εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ προσεσχηκὼς τῷ κάλλει τῆς Ἑλένης καὶ τὴν νεότητα, βληθεὶς ἔρωτι εἰς αὐτὴν […] ἔλαβεν αὐτὴν καὶ ἔφυγεν διὰ τῶν εἶχεν μεθ᾽ἑαυτοῦ πλοίων ἐκ τῆς Τροίας […].

9 See Jeffreys/ Jeffreys/ Scott, *The chronicle of John Malalas*, pp. 46–47.

10 Eustathius of Thessalonica, *Commentarii*, ed. M.Van der Valk, *Eustathii Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, 7 vols., Leiden 1971–1987.

scholar and erudite John Tzetzes devoted much of his work as a grammarian to Homer, including the *Carmina Iliaca* in hexameters.[11] His Homeric *Allegoriae*, written between 1146 and 1160 in the verse of Greek vernacular literature, the political verse, by contrast, were not addressed to scholars, but were concerned with the cultural formation of the German princess Berta of Sulzbach, who in 1146 had married the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos.[12] The princess herself, Tzetzes writes, had asked him "to make Homer, who encircles the whole inhabited world like the deep ocean, suitable for everyone to ford and cross."[13] In order to fulfil this goal, Tzetzes adopted the ancient method of allegorising the supernatural elements that still enjoyed great success in Byzantium. A characteristic example of this attitude is his severe criticism of the judgement of the three goddesses, an episode of Paris' biography that also enjoyed great popularity in western literature. This may well be the reason, as E. Jeffreys suggests, why this episode disappears from later versions of the Trojan story, such as the *Byzantine Iliad*.[14] In the *Allegoriae* Tzetzes inserts facts not narrated in the Iliad, which instead belong to the tradition of *antehomerica*, such as, for instance, the stories related to Paris' birth and youth, which later were to successfully endure, as we shall see below.

Even more evident is the popularizing intent of Tzetzes' contemporary Constantine Manasses (1130–87); his universal *Chronicle* in political verses was commissioned by the *sevastocratorissa* Irene, the sister-in-law of Berta and wife of Andronikos Komnenos.[15] Manasses too narrated the Trojan story, mainly dwelling on the events leading up to the war and its aftermath. His work, preserved in more than 80 manuscripts, was very popular and generally played an important role in providing narrative material for Greek vernacular literature.[16]

11 John Tzetzes, *Carmina Iliaca*, ed. P.A.M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Carmina Iliaca*, Catania 1995.

12 On the relationship between Tzetzes and Manasses on one hand and the imperial patroness on the other see Jeffreys, "*The Comnenian Background*".

13 Tzetzes, *Allegoriae*, vv. 28–30, ed. J.-F. Boissonade, *Ioannis Tzetzae Allegoriae Iliadis, accedunt Pselli Allegoriae*, Lutetiae 1851, p. 4: …τὸν μέγαν τὸν βαθὺν ὠκεανὸν Ὁμήρου / τὸν πᾶσαν περισφίγγοντα κύκλῳ τὴν οἰκουμένην / βατὸν κελεύεις ἅπασι καὶ πορευτὸν ποιῆσαι. On the Homer/sea metaphor cf. Cesaretti, *Allegoristi,* pp. 180–8, 198–99.

14 See Jeffreys, "The Judgement of Paris", and for a more general overview Hunger, "Allegorische Mythendeutung"; Cesaretti, *Allegoristi.*

15 Jeffreys, "The Sebastocratorissa Irene as Patron"; Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "Who was Eirene the Sevastokratorissa?".

16 The Trojan section in Manasses is at lines 1118–471. Praechter, "Zur Byzantinischen Achilleis", p. 485 defined Manasses' work as "Vermittlerin schrift- und vulgärgriechischer

Like Tzetzes and Manasses, Isaac Porphyrogenitus, author of a prose piece with the title *On what Homer left out*, took on the task of completing Homer and making him accessible to less educated people, as he himself writes.[17] His work narrates numerous episodes from the Trojan-cycle lacking in Homer, such as the dream of the pregnant Hecuba; the birth of Paris and his exposure on Mount Ida; his rescue by a shepherd; the return to Troy; the abduction of Helen; the Trojan War; Achilles' love for Polyxene and his death in a trap; the stratagem of the wooden horse; Troy's conquest and destruction; the sacrifice of Polyxene on Achilles' grave and many more. In short, as H. Hunger rightly remarked, this work mirrors the themes and the mental attitude underlying the medieval romances on Troy.[18] The author has been identified with Isaac Sebastocrator (1093-after 1152), the third-born son of Manuel Komnenos and hence the brother-in-law of Berta-Irene and also of the *sevastocratorissa* Irene.

Thus, it seems that there was a major interest in the Trojan subject matter at the court of Manuel Komnenos, from around mid-12th century onwards, precisely at a time when the same topic had begun to gain currency at the Norman court of Henry Plantagenet.[19] The huge *Roman de Troie* penned by Benoît de St-Maure, with its more than 30,000 verses is probably to be dated around the 1160s. It soon became a fundamental text for the development of French literature, and played a major role in establishing the Trojan material as a topic of narrative fiction. Its spread is attested by the great number of manuscripts, as well as by French prose translations and the Latin rendition, also in prose, by Guido delle Colonne, which was the origine of further adaptions in many vernacular languages.[20]

Literatur". On Manasses in prose see Praechter, "Eine vulgargriechische Paraphrase" and, more recently, Genova, "Vorläufige Bemerkungen".

17 Isaac Porphyrogenitus, *De rebus ab Homero pretermissis*, ed. H. Hinck, *Polemonis declamationes*, Leipzig 1873, pp. 61–62.

18 Hunger, *Profane Literatur*, vol. 2, p. 58.

19 Bratianŭ, "Le roman de Troie", gives the symbolic dialogue between a Frankish knight and a Walach of Bulgaria (1205), reported by the chronicle of Robert de Clari, which shows that both knew the Trojan legends. See Lavagnini, *Storie troiane*, p. 56, note 29; Shawcross, "Re-inventing the Homeland in the Historiography of Frankish Greece" esp. pp. 125–32.

20 Complete edition of the Roman: Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le roman de Troie*, ed. L. Constans, 6 vols., Paris 1904–12; see the fundamental study by Jung, *La légende de Troie* and Gorra, *Testi inediti*. Benoît's novel was also rewritten in prose; the oldest of these versions, so-called Troy 1, appears to have been written in Morea in the middle of the 13th century (cf. Jung, *la légende de Troie*, pp. 440–562 on the versions in prose); however, the Greek version is not based on it. See Jeffreys, *Byzantine Romance*, p. 227, n. 53.

Interestingly enough, the *Roman de Troie* was also translated into Greek vernacular. The transposition in around 15,000 political verses has come down to us in seven more or less complete manuscripts; it is fairly close to the original, though it tends, where possible, to summarize and abridge.[21] As a recent study suggests,[22] the translation was done in Frankish Morea, before 1281, when Leonardo da Veroli, – the chancellor of William of Villehardouin on behalf of Charles of Anjou, who was Lord of Morea since 1267 – passed away. According to the hypothesis of E. Jeffreys, Leonardo is likely to be the promoter of the Greek version of the *Roman de Troie*, which had just been 'reedited' shortly before and given illustrations stressing the political overtones already present in the text. Like the original a century earlier, the latter was also intended to consolidate the idea of the Frankish monarchy's Trojan ancestry. The Greek version was to strengthen the legitimacy of the new sovereign in the eyes of his Angevins' Greek subjects by implicitly underlining his Trojan descent.[23] On the other hand, the adaptor was surely aware of the Byzantine Trojan tradition represented by the *Chronicle* of Manasses – which he even quoted verbatim at some points[24] –, thereby fruitfully linking together the two different traditions.

Be that as it may, the Greek translation of Benoît's romance surely played a role of its own in the composition of the two vernacular Trojan tales mentioned at the beginning, the *Achilleid* and the *Byzantine Iliad.* An evident trace of this is the fact that in both texts the name of Achilles' beloved comrade, Patroclus, appears in the corrupt form *Pàndruklos*, which is not to be found elsewhere besides the *War of Troy*. This not only shows that these texts do belong to the same tradition, but it is also a clear indicator that they were written in a cultural sphere where no need was felt to link the stories narrated either to the Homeric tradition itself nor to the Byzantine one.

The last of these, however, was anything but forgotten. On the contrary, the learned Byzantine tradition is the only one on which two further works, also dealing with Trojan material, rely. The *Ilias* of Constantine Hermoniakos is a long composition of over 9.000 octosyllabic verses, largely based on Tzetzes

21 Ed. M. Papathomopoulos/E. Jeffreys, *Ὁ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος* (*The War of Troy*), Athens 1996; on the manuscripts, ibid., p. liv. On the way the translator approached the original text, see Conca, "Gli amori di Briseida".

22 Jeffreys, *Byzantine Romances*.

23 For another opinion see the chapter by K. Yiavis in this volume, pp. 133–34.

24 *War of Troy*, pp. lxiv-lxv; he also follows it in avoiding the episode of the judgement of Paris.

and Manasses, though other sources cannot be ruled out.[25] It tells the vicissitudes of the Trojan War, the events leading up to it, as well as those following the fall of the city. The author dedicated the work to his patron, John Komnenos Angelos Doukas, Lord of Epirus, about 1320. Although its literary value is limited, Hermoniakos' *Iliad* was to become much later, in the early 15th century, the basis for the only narrative text in Greek vernacular on this subject to be printed, the *Iliad* of Nikolaos Lukanis, which is credited with being the first Iliad's translation into a modern vernacular.[26]

The Vernacular 'Homer'

This retrospective examination was necessary in order to better understand the *Achilleid* and the so-called *Byzantine Iliad*, to which I will now turn. Very different from one another in content and the organization of the narrative material as well as in in many other respects, the texts share a similar focus on single heroes, Achilles and Paris respectively, rather than on the Trojan War as a whole. In this regard they reflect the late medieval tendency to fragment the Troy story into individual stories of the single protagonists, a tendency already present in Byzantine chroniclers, and which also was widespread in the West.[27]

A The *Achilleid*

The *Tale of Achilles* has come down to us in three different versions, handed down by a Neapolitan manuscript[28] (N), a London manuscript[29] (L), and an Oxford manuscript[30] (O) respectively. While in the London version, (1363 verses), the beginning is missing and the Oxford one (763 verses) is only a highly abridged version of the story, the longer Neapolitan version, (1820

25 See Jeffreys, "Constantine Hermoniakos and Byzantine Education"; Lavagnini, "Storie troiane" pp. 57–66.

26 Νικολάου Λουκάνη Ὁμήρου Ἰλιάς, Venice 1526, see also Follieri, "Su alcuni libri greci stampati a Venezia".

27 Cf. Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 29–30.

28 Napoli, Neap. III B 27, sheets 13r-59r. This is a miscellaneous codex written by four different scribes, dated, for the part that contains the *Achilleid*, to the years 1460–75 (van Gemert, *Μαρίνου Φαλιέρου*, p. 50, n. 6), or according to others (Smith, *Achilleid* p. 4) to the last quarter of the 15th or early 16th century.

29 London, British Library, Additional 8241, sheets 7r-78v.

30 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. T.5.24.

verses)[31] is not only more complete, but also more consistent from the narrative point of view, insofar as it displays both a prologue and a conclusion, where the hero's end is recounted. The problem of the priority given to one or other version which used to provoke lively debate, has lost much of its interest today, since it is commonly accepted that each version should be considered as a separate piece of literature in and of itself, without a direct link to an original text.[32] The N edition, however, must be considered in all respects the best and most interesting, as the following summary will show.

vv. 1–19 Prologue: the author addresses his audience declaring his intention to describe the power of Love and inviting them to listen.[33]

vv. 20–176 Beginning of the story: there is a king of the Greeks, in the land of the Myrmidons, who has a brave army and a very beautiful wife. The couple have no children, and the king, therefore, wants to be separated from his wife. After a while, however, the queen becomes pregnant, and a son is born amid great joy, and is called Achilles. The child stands out for his beauty. At the age of four he is educated in Greek letters (γράμματα ἑλληνικά), and at eight he is instructed in horse racing and in the military arts. Achilles first proves his valor in a tournament; the king is very much impressed, and wants to give up his own crown. Achilles refuses the crown, and asks to have instead a corps of chosen warriors in order to fight on behalf of the king.

vv. 177–365 Messengers bring the news that a foreign king is ransacking the lands of Achilles' father. Achilles asks to set out to defend the kingdom, and chooses the bravest warriors, which he recognizes at the first glance; he also selects 12 particularly formidable warriors to be his companions as well as his crack troops. Before setting out, they are all invited to a banquet with the king and queen. Achilles plays the cither and sings a song in praise of valorous young people, criticizing those who yield to the allurements of love. Achilles' cousin, Pandruklos, the best and handsomest of his companions, warns him about the power of love nobody is able to escape.

31 In the edition by O.L. Smith, who also inserts in the numeration the rubrics in prose and in red ink, the text amounts to 1926 lines. However, the rubrics cannot be considered an organic part of the composition, but constitute a specific aspect of the copyist's work. Hence, I follow the numbering of Cupane's edition. For a different opinion on the issue of the rubrics see Agapitos/Smith, "Scribes and Manuscripts of Byzantine Vernacular Romances", esp. pp. 68–71.

32 This is a problem common to all medieval texts in Greek vernacular; for this reason I will not be dealing with the issue here. See Smith, *The Byzantine Achilleid*, pp. 178–179 (on the *Achilleid* especially).

33 On the interplay between hearing and reading in the *Achilleid*, and more general in vernacular romances, see the chapter on audience by C. Cupane in this volume.

vv. 366–751 At dawn the army sets off, and reaches the kingdom's boundaries ten days later. Messengers from a frontier fortress belonging to Achilles' father come, and relate to him about the overwhelming strength of the enemies. The enemy's forces, however, are engaged in the siege of the castle and are therefore not able to deploy their troops. Since Achilles immediately moves towards the castle to bring reinforcements, the enemy king together with his five sons gets ready to fight.

A relentless battle between the two armies arises; it is described at length and with great attention to technical details showing a more than superficial knowledge of strategy and warfare. As to be expected, Achilles' skills prove to be superior. The enemy army cannot withstand the pressure and run away, and Achilles pursues the survivors well into their own lands, camping outside the king's castle. From the wall, women are watching the besieging army, among these is the king's daughter; at the mere sight of her Achilles the invincible is wounded by love. However, he has first to accomplish his duty as a commander. Thus, he writes a letter to his father announcing the victory, and asks him to move there, for it would be suitable to control the enemy's movements. His father complies with this request, and he moves to reach his son with the queen and his retinue, leaving a governor in his place.

vv. 752–830 We now move to the narration of Achilles' love for the enemy king's daughter. The setting shifts from the battle-field to a blooming garden, where the girl, according to a time honored romance tradition, dwells. Both garden and girl are described in great detail, the first being the symbolic counterpart of the second.[34] The *ekphrasis* (description) of the heroine is an obligatory *topos* in the romances. Here a noteworthy accumulation of adjectives is mobilised to describe the beauty of face and body, her supple gait, and the sweetness of her speech. Her attire and ornaments are described in detail as well, which interestingly both refer back to Frankish fashion. But the girl is haughty, she does not know love and refuses to yield to its allurement, just like Achilles himself earlier.

vv. 834–1096 Achilles meanwhile pines with love; he sends a message to the young girl, declaring his love. She responds immediately, albeit initially dismissively, and between the two a correspondence develops[35] which in the end – along with the active support of Eros himself appearing to her in a dream

34 On the intimate relationship between erotic heroine and the garden see Barber, "Reading the garden".

35 On this correspondence and, more generally, on the issue of literacy and orality in the *Tale of Achilles*, see Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting", pp. 158–62. The exchange of letters in the *Achilleid* is certainly reminiscent of the analogous scene in the romance

– lead's to the girl's capitulation. In her last letter she eventually asks her suitor to come as soon as possible. Accompanied by the 12 peers Achilles arrives at the castle, and with the aid of his lance, he jumps over the walls and right into the golden plane-tree. At this unexpected sight the girl faints. The two embrace each other and exchange kisses, but do not yet fully satisfy their desire; as dawn interrupts them, Achilles returns to his abode together with his men.

vv. 1097–1364 The preparations for the second visit, one day later, are described: Achilles and his men are richly dressed as for a feast, and also rich and refined is the harness of the hero's white horse.[36] The two lovers converse at a distance; Achilles agrees with his beloved a rendezvous for midnight. When the full moonlit night comes, he sets out again, this time on his black war horse. Under the walls he intones a love song, and then, while the faithful Pandruklos keeps watch, he jumps into the garden and is welcomed by the young girl, who is awaiting him impatiently. Now the two can at last consummate their love. Finally, the moment comes for them to leave: Achilles jumps down from the wall on to his horse's back, while his men putting their lances together form a kind of ladder on which the girl climbs down. She is entrusted to Pandruklos and five other knights who take her to Achilles' parents while Achilles stays to cover their escape and to face any enemies. Meanwhile, he sings a triumphant song in which he boasts of having abducted a bird from its cage, thereby provoking the girl's brothers. Thereupon they come out of the castle with the army, but Achilles defeats them all, albeit sparing the brothers of his beloved. Full of admiration for Achilles' prowess they surrender to him and offer to come with their parents and to celebrate the marriage.

vv. 1365–1548 The wedding celebrations are described at great length, the peak being a joust in the course of which Achilles unseats all the enemy knights with a single lance blow. Soon after, the girl's parents and brothers take their leave, and Achilles accompanies them a bit of the way, during which he displays his bravery by killing a lion. After this he takes his leave and returns home, where he is welcomed and feasted by his family. The girl sings a song in which she describes her love: her beloved is like a tree that has taken root in

Livistros and Rodamne (on which see the chapter on the original romances" by C. Cupane in this volume).

36 As the author will specify later on, the white horse is suitable for love encounters, the black one for war: v. 1219, ed. Cupane, p. 406: ἄσπρον εἶχεν εἰς ἔρωτας καὶ μοῦντον εἰς πολέμους.

her heart, while the branches spread out in her limbs. He is the master of her soul and her body.[37]

vv. 1549–1758 The young couple's happiness lasts six years. But the joys of this world do not endure; the young wife falls sick and lies on her deathbed. She asks Achilles and his men to wrest her from death, but men can do nothing against the invisible enemy, Charon. The double dialogic lament of the two lovers who are about to be separated for ever by death, appears to be the reverse image of the cheerful epistolary dialogue of verses 836–1065, which celebrated the sudden outburst of their love. On the death of his bride Achilles tries to take his own life, but he is kept back by his friends and relatives. The funeral is held and a sepulchre is built, but Achilles fails to get over his grief and dies after only one year.

vv. 1759–1820 Although the story has found its end with the death of both the hero and the heroine, the redactor of the N version gives it a new start by having Achilles 'resurrected' from death and taking part, as the Homeric hero did, in the Trojan War. Paris, the lord of Troy, proposes marriage between his sister Polyxene and Achilles, so as to make peace with the Greeks. However, this offer is nothing but trickery: when Achilles goes to the temple for the wedding, Paris and Deiphobos kill him with a dagger. Achilles is only able to say: "Deiphobos has killed me, with Paris, treacherously."[38] The war then lasts more years, and ends with the destruction of Troy.

The story, as the redactor claims, was taken from books by poets, rhetors and philosophers such as Homer, Aristotle, Plato and Palamedes. These were authors – he claims – everyone read to educate themselves, and were now turned into more comprehensible language, so that uneducated people could also hear of Achilles and could learn how everything in this world is vain and ephemeral.

After having read this synopsis it should be clear to anyone that very little of the Homeric hero is left in the story, apart from the names of Achilles, Myrmidons, and Patroclus (in the corrupted form Pandruklos). The prologue in the Neapolitan text extolling the power of Eros and placing the whole story under the seal of this god is missing in the other two versions, and has been

37 *Achilleid* N 1540–46, ed. Cupane, p. 424. This song is certainly reminiscent of one of the love letters in *Livistros and Rhodamne*, see on that Cupane, "Jenseits des Schattens der Alten?", pp. 97–99.

38 *Achilleid* N, 1792–93, ed. Cupane, p. 440: ἄλλο μηδὲν φθεγξάμενος εἰ μὴ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον· / Ἀνεῖλεν με Δηίφοβος καὶ Πάρις μετὰ δόλου. Both verses are to be found, although not together, in the *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses, lines 1326 and 1408, ed. Lampsides, pp. 74 and 77; on the relationship between both texts see below, pp. 252–53 and n. 59.

considered an addition.[39] Nevertheless, it fits in well with the rest of the tale, in which, at the salient moments, Eros is always evoked as a god, and under whom it is unavoidable to submit oneself.[40] The central nucleus of the story – common to all three versions in different forms, – is its bipartite structure, with a first section in which the hero's miraculous birth and his deeds are described, and a second one dominated by the love story. Such a bipartition is reminiscent of *Digenis Akritis*, which also presents a very similar biographical unfolding, and ends in the same way, with the death of the protagonist.[41] The similarity, however, ends here, since the *Achilleid* lacks the epic spirit still perceivable in all the versions of the *Digenis*, as well as its narrative richness, its density of references to *realia* and, most of all, its deep rootedness in concrete historical and geographical reality.[42] One may assume that the author of the tale of Achilles had in mind *Digenis*, and adapted it for a new audience in a simplified form, thereby replacing the new Byzantine frontier hero Digenis, by the hero par excellence of ancient Greece, Achilles. Little more than his name, however, remains of the ancient hero, since this new Achilles is a romantic figure.[43] His vicissitudes, narrated in a simple and linear way and without excessive concern for plot, are not without grace, especially in the part describing the love story of the two protagonists, where the use of metaphorical language are close to the oldest examples of modern Greek folk poetry.[44] Obviously, the anonymous author and his readers felt able to treat the figure of Achilles that freely because their scanty knowledge of the real Homeric characters did not create any obstacle in this regard. Such an unbiased stance towards the classical literary heritage, on the other hand, contrasts sharply

39 Smith, "Versions and Manuscripts", p. 317 observes that there was no space for an analogous prologue in the missing sheets of the London manuscript.

40 Eros the sovereign, present both in the romances of the Komnenian age and in those of subsequent epochs, corresponds to the ancient god of love in the new depiction given by courtly western poetry, as C. Cupane has shown in her studies "Ἔρως βασιλεύς", "Metamorphosen des Eros"; for another opinion, see Magdalino, "Eros the King".

41 On the biographical structure as a generic device in several vernacular narratives s. Moennig "Biographical Arrangement", esp. pp. 123–24.

42 On *Digenis Akritis* see the chapter by C. Jouanno in this volume. According to Lassithiotakis, "Παύσασθε γράφειν Ὅμηρον", p. 71, the presence of akritic material surviving within a love plot in the *Tale of Achilles* witnesses the gradual shifting from epic to romance in Byzantine literature. See also id., "Achille et Digénis".

43 Cupane, *Romanzi*, pp. 310–11 observes that the large scope given to the tragic love story of Achilles and Polyxene in the *Roman de Troie* (and in its Greek adaptation, *Polemos tis Troados*) could have suggested this new dimension for the Homeric hero.

44 The same Neapolitan codex III B 27 contains at sheets 118v.-121r 124v anonymous poems in Greek vernacular.

with the competence the text shows concerning the techniques of war (knowledge of military manuals is evident), and other *realia* of the Byzantine court,[45] although the latter are impossible to place in a precise chronological framework. The only certain data are those provided by the codex itself.[46] That is to say, the *Achilleid* N is a text copied after the fall of Constantinople, and probably written not long before it.

The final part of *Achilleid* N (vv. 1759–1820) which earlier scholars regarded as an interpolation, does, however, deserve separate consideration. In fact, the story of Achilles ends in version N, as in the other two versions, with the subsequent natural death of the protagonist some years later.[47] The addition of an alternative ending, this time taken from the post-Homeric tradition, can be understood when considering it as the work of a copyist-*diaskevast* that awkwardly wanted to 're-Homerize' the story. The end attained is unintentionally very modern in that it offers up an 'open' ending, with the possibility for the reader to choose the conclusion that he or she prefers.

B The *Byzantine Iliad* (*Diegesis*)

This romance in political verses on a Trojan subject was long neglected by scholars. Judged "an untidy abridged edition" by Krumbacher, it has only been mentioned by a few more recent scholars,[48] and was first edited in 1975.[49] The plot can be summarised as follows:

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45 On this subject see Lavagnini, *Note*; Cupane, in the notes to her version of the *Achilleid*, *passim.*

46 See note 27 *supra*.

47 *Achilleid*, line 1758, ed. Cupane, p. 438: Καὶ τότε ἀπέθανεν μετὰ κανέναν χρόνον καὶ αὐτὸς (to be corrected καὶ αὐτὸς μετὰ κανέναν χρόνον). The verse is usually seen as an interpolation or a substitute for a rubric, although it does appear in a very similar form elsewhere: see Smith, *The Byzantine Achilleid*, p. 148 and n. 129; Cupane, *Romanzi*, p. 463.

48 See Krumbacher, *Geschichte* p. 848, Beck, *Geschicht*e, p. 139, Mitsakis, "Χρονολόγηση", p. 71, Michailidis, "Palamedes", pp. 261–80.

49 *A Byzantine Iliad*, ed. Nørgaard/Smith, to be supplemented with the textual remarks by Kambylis, "Beilaüfiges zur Byzantinischen Ilias". By contrast, the valuable doctoral dissertation presented in London in 1971 by D. Dedes is unpublished. An Italian translation of the work, based on a new reading of the manuscript, with extensive comment, is Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*. The narrative structure is analysed by U. Moennig, "Ἔρως, Ἱστορία, Θάνατος", who rightly underscores the fundamental role of fate (Μοίρα) in Paris' vicissitudes. Less convincing is his interpretation of Paris as a negative hero, depicted according to the rhetorical rules of the ψόγος (blame) (see Moennig, "Ἔρως", p. 83, "Biographical Arrangement", p. 241). However, the portrayal is, in my opinion, far more nuanced and sympathetic, Paris actually appearing both as a victim of fate, worth to be commiserated with, and an adventurous young man and passionate lover.

vv. 1–176 King Priam has many children and a beautiful wife. While she is again pregnant, the king sees three times in a dream that his wife gives birth to a torch that sets the city of Troy on fire. After consulting the noblemen and the diviners, he is advised to put the child to death as soon as he is born. Hence, when Paris is born, the parents are forced to put him in a box sealed with pitch, and to throw it into the sea. The wind brings the box onto a beach, off the island of Mytilene, where he is picked up by the rich landowner Selinios, who has recently lost a child and is therefore happy to raise the baby. Like Achilles, the child is first educated in Greek letters (Ἑλληνικὴν παιδείαν), and from the age of ten in the military arts.

vv. 177–432 Paris guards sheeps together with his Selinios' shepherds, and becomes their leader; to punish one of the shepherds for a minor transgression, he cuts his ear off. The shepherd's parents protest to Priam. Paris and Selinios are called to Troy to justify themselves, and the King recognizes his son. New prodigies announce bad luck because of the return of Paris. Put under pressure by the nobility, Priam confines his son with 12 peers of the same-age to a tower without doors or windows. Here he dwells until one day he throws one of his fellows prisoners down from the tower, once again to punish him for some transgression. There are protests among the Trojan archons as well as the common people, who want to set the tower on fire. But Paris forestalls this plan and the night before it is due to be carried out, escapes by sea in a small galleon; in a storm he loses his balance and is shipwrecked on an island. Here he is welcomed and fed by the monks of a convent.

vv. 433–700 The beautiful Helen is now introduced. She has many suitors vying for her, until the decision is taken to choose the bridegroom by lots. The lucky one is the minor king Menelaos; the other suitors swear to help him if anyone should disturb the marriage. So Helen and Menelaos now live happily on the island. Paris decides to enter into the service of the island's king. He immediately shows his skill, and is admired for his cleverness and beauty. He is very dear to Menelaos and Helen, who install him as the head of the palace. Helen and Paris fall in love, thanks also to the music of the lyre, which both play masterly. Helen is the first to declare her love, which Paris passionately reciprocates. Once Menelaos sets out to visit one of his castles, the two lovers eventually succeed in being alone together; their happiness reaches its peak.

vv. 701–856 Helen is pregnant; the two decide in despair to take refuge in Troy. Dressed as a man, Helen embarks with Paris taking Menelaos' riches. In Troy the couple are welcomed by new prodigies; now fate is about to be fulfilled. The Greek kings gather to avenge Helen's abduction; among them is Achilles, about whom, we are told, Homer wrote a lot. Achilles loved Chryseis (Briseida) and lived with her in his tent. But a plague spreads through the army;

the oracles enjoin Achilles to return Chryseis to her father. Achilles, grieved, dresses as a woman and withdraws from the battle. One of the wise men succeeds in uncovering him with a stratagem. Pretending to be a merchant he goes around selling swords: Achilles, attracted, grabs one of them, and this gesture betrays him. His companions convince him to return to the battle.

vv. 857–969 The war lasts nine years; to end it, Trojans and Greeks entrust its outcome to a duel between Paris and Menelaos. Helen climbs on the wall to watch the struggle: everyone admires her. The duel proceeds with chequered fortunes. Menelaos comes out on top, but the goddess breaks the strap with which he has grabbed Paris. The duel having been ineffective, Priam and Paris offer to Achilles Polyxene's hand in marriage as a peace token; the latter accepts, and enters Troy for the wedding accompanied by Pandruklos and his 12 peers. But Paris and Deiphobos kill him treacherously with a dagger.

vv. 970–1145 After one more year of war, the Greeks decide to draw on a subterfuge: they construct a huge golden and silver horse, and have 300 armed men hidden inside; then they pretend to sail away. The rejoicing Trojans pull the horse into the city as a victory trophy, after knocking down the gate. At night, 300 come out, and make signals to the Greek fleet from above the wall. Achilles' son, Pyrrhus, slaughters Priam and his whole family on the father's grave. With Troy having been destroyed, the Greeks are held up on their way home by a south wind. The ghost of Achilles appears asking that Priam, Paris and all their family should be sacrificed on his sepulchre. The already mentioned slaughtering scene is now presented again in more detail, thereby offering the author the opportunity to produce an extensive lament on Achilles' death and on the frailty of human life.

As this summary immediately makes evident, the most noticeable feature of the text is its bipartite structure: in fact two separate stories are juxtaposed, one about Paris and one about Achilles' deeds in Troy. Beyond that, the overall tone in the *Byzantine Iliad* is not dissimilar to that of the *Achilleid*, for here too the heroes of the Trojan War themselves have become "romance" heroes. But the anonymous author not only gave the Trojan story a 'romantic' hue, but also incorporated various motifs from differing narrative traditions. In fact, we are faced with a mixture of narrative ingredients which often give scope, alongside the traditional elements of the Trojan legends, to very fanciful developments. Nørgaard and Smith have pointed out the analogy between the episode of Paris' abandonment and the biblical story of Moses' exposure as well as to the mythos of Danae and Perseus as told by the ancient poet Simonides of Ceos. Although both these stories cannot be ignored, the more convincing parallel is to be found in the episode of the abandonment at sea of the presumed dead

body of Archistratigusa in the romance of *Apollonius of Tyre*, with whom our *Diegesis* also shares many other motifs.[50]

Another work, whose affinities with our Trojan story deserve to be mentioned, is the romance of *Belisarius*. This is not so much because of precise narrative similarities, or even specific textual echoes, though they exist,[51] but rather because of an analogy of 'climate', particularly in the representation of the power relationships between king, nobility and common people. If in *Belisarius* the emperor is shown alternatively yielding to the pressures of ones or the other, in our story the Trojan king is continually sanctioned by both nobility and common people, who judge him and affect his actions.[52] Thematic affinities to other vernacular romances, such as *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, *Florios and Platziaflora*, *Livistros and Rhodamne*, the *Achilleid* and *Imberios and Margarona*, can also be detected. The childhood and upbringing of Paris are similar to those of Imberios, Florios and Achilles; Priam's palace vaguely recalls the *Erotokastron* in *Velthandros*; Paris after the shipwreck is fed by monks just like Imberios who is given shelter in a convent; he shows his valor in a joust, just as Imberios and Achilles also do.[53] Here, too, the thematic analogies are buttressed by textual correspondences. One single verse (973), in which Pandruklos and Achilles' 12 peers are mentioned, has led some scholars to infer direct knowledge of the *Achilleid*.[54]

Naturally, greater curiosity exists concerning the origin of the Trojan material found in the story. Given the number not only of anachronisms, but also of fanciful elements – like the shipwreck of Paris, Helen's pregnancy, her disguising herself as a man – accuracy in mirroring any presumable sources on the

50 On the analogies with the romance of Apollonius (vv. 390–405, 135–160, 118–200 and 216–233, ed. Kechagioglou: Απολλώνιος της Τύρου, vol. I, pp. 353–56) see Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 31–32.

51 Textual correspondences are not in themselves proof of dependence of one text on the other, as G. Spadaro maintained (in "Problemi" III, 262–66 as regards *Byzantine Iliad*), but are to be considered in the perspective of the particular style of the first literature in Greek vernacular. To the pioneer studies by Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "The Style of Byzantine Popular Poetry", much literature has been added more recently, showing that the particular circumstances of the composition and the transmission of these texts in Greek vernacular, mostly anonymously, led to the formation of a formulaic and repetitive style.

52 *Belisarius* (ed. Bakker-van Gemert), *passim*; cf. Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 33 and 51.

53 More precise comparisons can be found in the dissertation by D. Dedes, in E. Jeffreys, "The Judgement of Paris", p. 116, and Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, in the notes to the translation.

54 As Spadaro, "Problemi" III, p. 257, first showed; for an alternative assessment see Moennig, "*Schiffskatalog*", p. 285.

part of our author is not to be expected. Nevertheless, the link with the Byzantine tradition, and particularly with the *Chronicle* of Manasses, is evident: indeed, elements of the old sagas of Paris and Achilles handed down by the ancient mythographers, which are to be found in the *Diegesis*, are largely the same already included in Manasses' story.

In Constantine Manasses' Trojan section,[55] the following episodes are described: Hecuba's dream; the soothsayers' suggestion of exposing the baby to wild beasts or throwing him into a fire (1126–29); the birth of the lovely baby, so winning as to arouse pity in his parents, who do expose it but in such a way that it is found and raised by shepherds (1130–41), until the baby reaches adulthood and Priam takes him back. Paris then kills a relative and leaves for Sparta (1142–49) where Menelaos welcomes him; but Eros the tyrant causes Paris to see Helen (whose beauty is amply described and praised) after Menelaos' departure, and makes him to fall in love with her. With Helen's consent Paris abducts her and sets out for Troy (1157–1170). Paris' youth is very briefly mentioned in Manasses, but the corresponding, much ampler narration of the *Diegesis* certainly echoes yet another passage by Manasses (vv. 749–777), where the author versifies Herodotus' account (Herodotus 1, 108–25) of the birth, infancy and youth of Cyrus, who behaves in almost the same way Paris does, and is also described as having been exposed and risen up by a shepherd. It is clear that this story, especially in two details – the exposed child who replaces a child that has recently died, and the precocious aptitude for command, which allows for their later recognition – offered the author of the *Diegesis* a welcome opportunity to widen and enrich the story of Paris' childhood and youth.[56]

The *Diegesis* again coincides with the story told by Manasses in its second part. This can be seen in the episodes of the meeting of the Greeks in Troy (Manasses vv. 1222–1397), Achilles' death in the well-known trap (vv. 1377–97), the construction of the horse, the way it is carried inside the walls of Troy, and finally the capture of the city with the consequent slaughter of adults and children (vv. 1415–52).

But Manasses' story also contains parts such as the arrival of the fugitive Paris and Helen to Egypt, where Helen is held back by Proteus (vv. 1171–1208), and the episode of the Greek hero Palamedes, who becomes the victim of Ulysses' envy, which are both absent in the *Diegesis*. By contrast, the latter

55 Constantine Manasses, *Chronicle*, lines 1119–70, ed. Lampsides, pp. 64–66.

56 Moennig, Ἔρως, Ἱστορία, Θάνατος pp. 82–83, as well as id., "Biographical Arrangement" p. 126, suggests that the apocryphal *Life of Judas* – a text today only extant in Latin and other vernacular adaptations, but purportedly also extant in a Greek version – may have been another possible source.

narrates facts missing in Manasses, like Paris' upbringing and military training,[57] the Homeric episodes of Achilles' anger and the duel between Paris and Menelaos, along with the teichoscopy (τειχοσκοπία), present instead in Tzetzes and in Hermoniakos. Lastly, the episode of Achilles among Lycomedes' daughters is treated very fancifully in our text, where it is connected to that of the hero's anger. The *Diegesis* closes with the prodigious apparition of Achilles' ghost who stops the Greek ships on their way home; this episode is lacking in the ancient tradition, and is only to be found in a few Byzantine adaptations of the Troy matter, such as those by Isaac Porphyrogenitus and Hermoniakos.

It should be clear from what has been said that Manasses' *Chronicle* could not have furnished by itself all the narrative material the *Byzantine Iliad* displays. However, in seeking other derivations it will be useful to more closely consider the way the identifiable traditional material is dealt with in the *Diegesis*. By considering, for example, the episode of Hecuba's dream and the subsequent prophecy, as they are told by Tzetzes in the *Prolegomena* to the *Allegories of the Iliad*,[58] the poet's characteristic approach can be ascertained. Whenever he retains traditional elements, he always uses them as a starting point for developments and amplifications; he not only paraphrases by inserting rhetorical embellishments, as we see it by Manasses and, above all, Hermoniakos, rather he also refines the narration introducing novelistic elements of disparate origin, which often point to a different literary taste.

A comparison with only a few verses of the poem already allow us to observe that the strictly Trojan material, even when present, at some points is almost entirely left in the background. We frequently notice that, alongside passages where the source is reproduced almost verbatim, in many other cases the plot has been freely embroidered, sometimes through the adoption of narrative schemes closer to the structure of a popular text. There is, for instance, the triplication of actions, or the occasional use of characteristic devices of the romance genre, such as *ekphraseis* (descriptions) – beauty and magnificence of sovereigns and heroes, Priam's palace, Paris' tower –, or the introduction of elements drawn from the reach stock of different, though well-established narrative traditions (the abandonment of the infant at sea, the youth of Paris/ Cyrus).

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57 For Paris' education see Malalas, *Chronicle* IV 2, ed. Thurn, p. 68, lines 24–34; Tzetzes, *Prolegomena*, vv. 236–255, ed. Boissonade, pp. 13–14 (as well as a prose text, Ὑπόθεσις Ἰλιάδος, attributed to him, on which, cf. Mertens, "Songe d'Hécube", p. 22); Hermoniakos II 66–68, ed. Legrand, p. 28.

58 Lines 176–81, ed. Boissonade, p. 12 (= Manasses, *Chronicle*, vv. 1121–29, ed. Lampsidis, p. 64; Hermoniakos II, vv. 10–33, ed. Legrand, pp. 25–26)

We also have to bear in mind the manifold pathways along which the Trojan material was-handed down. One thinks of the Homeric commentaries, of the several ὑποθέσεις or explanations ἐξηγήσεις Ἰλιάδος (summaries or interpretations of the Iliad) accompanying Byzantine Homer editions, or the Homeric paraphrases, and of prose retellings like the one already mentioned by Isaac Porphyrogenitus, although his popularizing intent is quite different from that underlying the *Diegesis*. This kind of literature, which probably also included texts not known to us, must have provided the background for our text, which uses exclusively Greek material. Such a conclusion seems compelling since there is nothing in the *Diegesis* that does not find its counterpart in Byzantine tradition, and, also, the text does not show any direct trace of western models, apart from the generic chivalric climate, common to works written after the Fourth Crusade. However, it is difficult to specify the precise relationship between the authors known to us and the *Diegesis*, for the text does not display any textual repetition, except in the case of Manasses, where the author, however, consistently corrupts the wording of his source.

Be that as it may, the relationship with Manasses is an important one, not least because, as already hinted at, it ties together the *Diegesis* and the *Achilleid*'s ending in the Neapolitan codex.[59] Since both the so-called interpolation of *Achilleid* N and our romance are likely to depend for their corresponding parts on a common original, I believe that the existence of a text can be hypothesized, in which the different traditional elements present in the *Diegesis* were gathered. This must have been written by an author whose cultural background enabled him to draw directly at least on the most recent representatives of the Homeric tradition, which he further enriched with elements coming from the vast and partly 'submerged' literature which arose on the margin of the

59 U. Moennig, "*Schiffskatalog*", after a meticulous comparison of both passages concludes that the *Byzantine Iliad* has the best readings (qua more close to the alleged source, Manasses), and should therefore be seen as the giving, the *Achilleid* being the receiver (besides, p. 284 n.12, he makes me take the opposite view, but see Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia* p. 84). Hence, the original version of the *Byzantine Iliad* precedes the *Achilleid* N, and must date back to first half of the 15th century. However, one has to take into account that copyists of vernacular texts did not aim at reproducing accurately their model, rather they dealt with it freely and unbiased. Therefore, it is not possible to demonstrate the dependence of one text from another on the basis of textual parallels. On the contrary, as I already showed elsewhere (Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia,* pp. 60–61, 84–85) the *Achilleid*, whose older manuscript (N) goes surely back to the second half of the 15th century, appears much closer to the Byzantine atmosphere of the Palaiologan romances than the *Diegesis* with its modern-looking narrative style.

Homeric text. It does not appear plausible to attribute this operation to the writer of the *Byzantine Iliad* himself, as he seems to have had a greater familiarity with the vernacular literature of his time, on which he draws liberally. In contrast, his relationship with antiquity is very vague and hazy, going as far as to a loss of linguistic identity: verses 162 [169] and 284 [302] Πάρις γὰρ λέγεται βρετὸς εἰς τὴν Ἑλλήνων γλῶσσαν ("Paris means foundling in the language of the ancient Greeks.") in this respect are striking. The process of the modernization of the hero, however, is still only half complete. If Paris is a knight of fortune, as he himself declares: "I am a poor fellow and travel around the world; I left my place and homeland seeking my fortune and my destiny",[60] his Homeric derivation, nevertheless, cannot be doubted. However, the same does not hold true for the figure of Achilles in the romance devoted to him, it is therefore no accident that the author of the *Achilleid's* ending in the Neapolitan codex tries somehow to compensate for this loss of Homeric characteristics.

It is difficult to delineate the personality of an author within a literary production which is by definition anonymous. It should however be noted that the narrator of the *Byzantine Iliad* is a very intrusive presence in the narrative. His first-person interventions are frequent, both at the beginning of the composition, to expound the subject, and later on, when he is concerned with asserting his narratorial inadequacy, or affirming his intention to restrain from lengthy description in order to avoid boredom. Furthermore, he often takes the reader by the hand, helping him to follow the changes of scene, marking narrative sequences and above all underlying again and again his inferiority in comparison to the wise men of old, first of all Homer. However, his consciousness in belonging to an ancient, glorious tradition cannot be denied. It comes to the fore, for example, in his claim of having drawn on ancient books written by highly learned scholars, which he rewrote in a plain way in order to make accessible to the youngest and simplest people the story's moral meaning, by demonstrating the vanity of all worldly things. To be sure, such a purported simplicity is not original, if anything it is formulated in a topical way. This, of course, does not mean that it has no function in our romance, which employs such stereotypical expressions with remarkable frequency. Rather, although such topicality seems to underline in a more or less conscious way the author's

60 *Byzantine Iliad*, vv. 610–12 [630–32], ed. Nørgaard/Smith, p. 44: ἄνθρωπος εἶμαι ἐκ τοὺς πτωχούς, τὸν κόσμο τριγυρίζω / ἐξῆλθα ἐκ τοῦ τόπου μου καὶ ἐκ τὰ γονικά μου /τὸ ριζικὸν τῆς τύχης μου θέλω νὰ δοκιμάσω. On the issue of the western derivation of the adventure motif see Cupane, "Topica romanzesca"; more specifically on the "errance" as a typical feature of chivalric existence in Byzantine vernacular understanding see Lassithiotakis, "Le personage du chevalier errant", pp. 199–200.

uneasiness in approaching an elevated subject like the Homeric one, it also reflects the precise authorial intention of praising the importance of the work undertaken to his intended audience.

If this vernacular re-enacting of the celebrated Trojan story is deeply indebted to the romance tradition, which enjoyed greater diffusion and success at that time, it must also be recognized that it has its own originality and literary physiognomy. There is particular attention paid to the expression of feelings and states of mind. One thinks of Priam's worry after seeing the dream, Priam's and Hecuba's grief in separating from their child, the compassionate words of the shepherd and his wife when finding the abandoned baby, Selinios' desperation faced with the king, the parents' joy during the *anagnorisis* (recognition), or the joyful words Paris utters to express his love for Helen.

Furthermore, one has to note a tendency towards digressions accompanied by an often highly effective descriptive minuteness, as in the scene of the recovery of the box the baby Paris lies in by the shepherd, where a calm bucolic and marine landscape is abruptly disturbed by the sudden coming into sight of the box, followed by the lively scene of the recovery. The marine and indeed insular setting is the favourite one. The beach is the place of the abandonment and finding of Paris, as well as that of his later adventures. This familiarity with the sea seems to be a realistic element of the tale, which is consistently set in the landscape of Troas, between Troy, Axos, 'the island of Menelaos', Troy again and then Achilles's grave.

But a marine and island reality is relevant for the most of Greece, as much today as it was in antiquity, and still more so in late Byzantine times, when the island areas touched by Venetian and Frankish influence were already showing lively signs of a new modern Greek culture. Hence, there are no elements that can tell us about a precise geographical origin for this text, just as it is almost impossible to delimit its chronological framework. If the copy that has come down to us stems, broadly speaking, from the 16th century,[61] the text is certainly much older. Certain linguistic characteristics, like the way of forming the future tense, some elements of its lexicon, and the absence of rhyme move it back about one century. Be that as it may, the *Byzantine Iliad*, as it has come down to us, must be later than the romances of *Apollonius* and *Belisarius*, as well as the *Achilleid*, and also, therefore, of the other romances with which it shows similarities. The last of these is *Imberios and Margarona*, a text, which displays striking analogies with our Trojan story, not only in language but also in tone and style. The characteristics that account for the popularity of *Imberios*

61 According to the chronology proposed by Astruc-Concasty, *Le Supplément Grec*, III, p. 27.

and Margarona, the only vernacular romance to have been printed,[62] such as its tone somewhere between the naive and the adventurous, are also present in our text. This lends it its particular physiognomy as a work of naive craftsmanship, but still bearing the signs of a millennium-old tradition, albeit now reduced to a simple story.

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CHAPTER 10

Shared Spaces: 1 Digenis Akritis, the Two-Blood Border Lord

Corinne Jouanno

In a poem addressed to the emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80), Ptochoprodromos ("Poor Prodromos"), playing the part of a poor monk deeply shocked at seeing the higoumenes of his monastery infringe the rules of ascetism, wishes the coming of a "New Akritis" to smash the lavish dishes the shameful fathers are being served at lunch, while the ordinary brothers are reduced to starvation.[1] The presence of this akritic reference in one of the *Ptochoprodromic poems* is important, not only because it testifies to the fame of the warrior hero Digenis Akritis round the middle of the twelfth century, but also, and mostly, because it can be read as a clear indication of *Digenis*' belonging to the vernacular repertoire. As a matter of fact, Ptochoprodromos' poem is written in a low linguistic register, and composed in the fifteenth-syllable "political" verse which was to become the typical medium of the still emerging vernacular literature. The poet insists on his limited competence as a writer (he feels like an ant, compared with the "lions" of rhetoric), and he displays his intention of dealing with prosaic, unpretentious matters, not with *mythoi*, i.-e. "ancient stories, meaningful but hard to understand" – an authorial pretence to be viewed as a literary game in which the Akritic reference evidently plays its part: for it is not an Achilles the poor monk envisages as a valuable avenger, but a more familiar figure, borrowed from a literary field which is not that of high-brow *mythologia*. In some manuscripts of this *Ptochoprodromic poem*, the emperor is even compared to a "new/second Akritis",[2] in a parodic reappropriation of the *topoi* of official enkomiastic literature, where comparisons with great figures of the classical tradition, mythical ones like Achilles or historical ones like Alexander, were a common device of heroicization. In substituting an ostensibly modern, popular hero for the distant, mythical paradigms usually called for in courtly rhetorical texts, Ptochoprodromos offers us a valuable testimony about *Digenis Akritis*' literary pedigree, a subject much debated

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1 *Ptochoprodromos* IV 189–92, ed. Eideneier, p. 149.

2 Such is the case in the *Parisinus gr. suppl.* 1034 (a. 1364), which forms the basis of Eideneier's edition (see l. 544, p. 168), as well as in the *Parisinus gr. Coislin.* 382 (15th c.), and in the *Vaticanus gr.* 579 (14th – 15th c.).

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among scholars: the Akritic question is indeed almost as complicated as the Homeric one, for the poem telling Digenis' adventures is an enigmatic work, whose genesis, historical value, and even literary categorization have caused long-lasting controversy, since a first version of the text was rediscovered, in the monastery of Soumela, in the second half of the 19th century.

A Multiform Work

Being, like the *Alexander Romance*,[3] an anonymous work with a fluid textual tradition, *Digenis Akritis* has passed through several rewritings, and the six surviving manuscripts which contain the story of the Two-Blood Border Lord offer rather different versions, none of which can be considered as the primary form of the work. The two oldest, and presumably closest to the original, have been preserved in the Escorial manuscript (E) and in that of Grottaferrata (G). The remaining four versions – the Trebizond (T), Andros (A), and Oxford (O) versions, and the Prose version (P) – are indeed late rewritings, deriving from a now lost version (* Z), produced in the early 16th century by a certain Eustathios, who compiled the text of E with a text closely similar to G.[4] Much of the Akritic scholarship has been devoted to the controversial question of E or G primacy; the debate was sharpened by the linguistic peculiarities of the two texts, for the Escorial version is written in vernacular Greek, while the language of G is much more conservative, so that the appreciation of their respective worth was anachronistically influenced by the conflictual and highly political question of Modern Greek *diglossia*, which in the 19th/20th centuries divided supporters of *katharevousa* and advocates of the demotic. Although the Grottaferrata manuscript, copied in the late thirteenth or early 14th century, is older than the late 15th century Escorial manuscript,[5] it is difficult to assert with certainty the date of composition of the two texts, even if there is a strong suspicion that G may have come into being during the 12th century.

These two versions share a common core that must go back to the lost original work, the *Ur-Digenis*. They tell roughly the same story, and open with the

3 On this, see the chapter by U. Moennig in the present volume.

4 Jeffreys, "*Digenis Akritas* Manuscript Z"; see also Trapp's synoptic edition of the oldest versions (*Digenes Akrites*). Generally on the versions of the poem and their chonology see Jeffreys, "The Afterlife".

5 The Escorial manuscript was copied between 1485 and 1493, according to Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, p. xx.

adventures of Digenis' father, a Syrian emir who falls in love with the daughter of a Roman (i.-e. Byzantine) general (*strategos*), whose estate he has plundered during a raid against Romania: defeated in a single combat with the girl's youngest brother, the Emir converts to Christianity in order to marry her; then he settles in Romania, and is soon followed by all his kinsmen. Born from this mixed marriage, Digenis is a "Two-Blood" hero, as the name indicates. Both E and G tell episodes relating to his boyhood – his first initiatic hunting and his abduction of the (anonymous) daughter of the general Doukas. After that, they narrate the exploits of Digenis, once married with the Girl, against various enemies, a dragon, bandits called *apelatai*, and a Warrior-Maid (designed in G as an Amazon[6]). Then both texts describe the abode where Digenis settles with the Girl near the river Euphrates, and both end with the evocation of the couple's death. Besides this common material, G and E also share formal pecularities that must be a legacy of the *Ur-Digenis*: in both texts, the story of Digenis' first hunting is introduced by a second prologue, which makes the bipartite structure of the work all the more apparent. In both texts, some biographical episodes (Digenis' fight against the dragon, the *apelatai* and the Warrior-Maid) are part of a first-person account, embedded in the third-person narrative.[7] A close comparison of the two versions, both composed in the same fifteenth-syllabe political verse, also brings to the fore the presence of a small stock of shared lines or half-lines,[8] in a rather vernacular vein, from which one can infer that the original work must have been linguistically closer to E than to G.

The proximity of the two oldest versions of *Digenis* varies greatly depending on the sections of the story.[9] While both accounts of the Girl's abduction are rather close, we also find common episodes told in a very different way, the most striking example being the story of the Warrior-Maid Maximou,[10] where the freedom of tone of the Escorial version sharply contrasts with the moralizing standpoint adopted by the narrator of G, who concludes the story of Digenis' adultery with Maximou by evoking the murder of this Warrior-Maid,

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6 Such a designation is rather inaccurate, for Maximou's army is not composed of women, but of male warriors.

7 E 1102–605; G, 5, 21–289 and 6, 4–805.

8 Fourteen whole lines and about forty half-lines occur in both versions without significant alterations; lines sharing lexical items, especially significant words repeated in the same metrical position, can be added to this rather small stock (see Beaton, "*Digenes Akrites* on the Computer").

9 For the "core material" in the Lay of the Emir, cf. Beaton, "An Epic in the Making?", pp. 66–72.

10 See Ricks, "Maximou's Metamorphoses".

whom he apparently condemns as a seductress (her designation as an Amazon may indeed be part of her portrayal as a female character transgressing the norms of a patriarcal society). Each version also includes episodes of its own: Digenis' first visit to the *apelatai* appears only in E, Digenis' encounter with the emperor only in G, as well as the story of the emir Haplorabdes' daughter, abandoned by the "Roman" lover she had eloped with, then rescued by Digenis from an attack of Arab brigands, and eventually raped by him, in a sequence mirroring his adultery with Maximou. Such additional episodes, probably missing in the *Ur-Digenis*, may have been borrowed by the E and G redactors from alternative oral Akritic traditions (the first visit to the *apelatai*), or modelled on the pattern of episodes available in other kinds of sources, mainly hagiographic (the encounter with the emperor, the story of Haplorabdes' daughter).

The literary character of both versions is thus rather different: the Escorial text, made of five narrative units loosely connected to each other, has an episodic structure, all the more accentuated by the presence of various gaps and chronological inconsistencies, of which the most striking is the insertion of Digenis' first visit to the *apelatai* before, and not after, the story of his first hunting.[11] Such a peculiarity makes the *Ur-Digenis* likely to have been not a unified work, but rather a collection of episodes relating to Digenis and his father, the Emir.[12] In G, the plot is more coherent, and the story has been given a more consistently biographical structure, though the final result may still seem uneven, because transitions between the episodes are sometimes very abrupt. The stylistic contrast between G and E is even more remarkable: the E version is not only written in a more simple, popular language, but its literary form has many affinities with the epic oral style,[13] while the Grottaferrata version, written in a more classicizing idiom,[14] is also characterized by a more rhetorical, sophisticated style, far removed from the formular expression of oral tradition. But it would be hazardous to conclude from such stylistic peculiarities that E is

11 See Ricks, "Is the Escorial *Akrites* a Unitary Poem?". In *Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, Ricks distinguishes the five following sequences: Lay of the Emir, Akritis among the Raiders, Romance of Akritis, Exploits of Akritis, Retirement and death of Digenis.

12 Jeffreys, "Byzantium's Epic Past", p. 447, says that the *Ur-Text* must have been "extremely disjointed".

13 See Fenik, *Digenis. Epic and Popular Style*.

14 "Mixed language" would perhaps be more appropriate: despite its intentionally archaizing style (frequent use of classicizing particles like δέ, γάρ, μέν, οὖν, absence of the negation δέν), G displays a number of contemporary linguistic features; according to Soltic, "The Distribution of Object Clitic Pronouns", the position of the clitic pronoums obeys the same medieval Greek rule in G as in E.

chronologically prior to G, for its epic oral style is perhaps not a feature directly inherited from the lost *Ur-Digenis*: it is more probably due to the influence of Late Byzantine oral performances,[15] as suggested by the stylistic similarities one can observe between the Escorial text and medieval demotic songs (like *Armouris* and *The Son of Andronikos*[16]) as well as the small corpus of Akritic songs (relating to Digenis/Akritis[17]). However, we do not know if these folk-songs, collected in Modern Greece, were already circulating in Byzantium, so their links with the various versions of *Digenis* is a controversial matter, for the direction of influence between the songs and the poem remains unclear.[18]

A Story of the Past

Being the son of an emir who first appears in the role of a ferocious enemy of the Byzantines, Digenis the Two-Blood hero is a literary figure rooted in the Byzantine heroic age of the wars against the Arabs, and has therefore often been compared with the protagonists of medieval epics such as the Old French *Chanson de Roland* (late 11th century) or the Spanish *Poem of my Cid* (ca. 1200). Much scholarly discussion has been devoted to the historical value of the Byzantine work, once considered as a witness about the long-lasting conflicts which, from the 8th to the 10th century, opposed the Christian Byzantine Empire to the Islamic Caliphate. Various rather unconvincing attempts were made to find historical prototypes for the poem's protagonist;[19] Digenis' historicity indeed appears extremely doubtful, so that he markedly differs from the

15 See Jeffreys, "Byzantium's Epic Past", p. 449.

16 Both songs have been preserved in 15th-century manuscripts. For a comparison of E with *The Son of Andronikos*, see Thanapoulos, *Ο Διγενής Ακρίτης Εσχοριάλ*.

17 The two names never appear together in the Akritic songs, which include two main categories of texts relating to: 1) the abduction of the daughter of King Levandis by Digenis/of the wife of Digenis/Akritis; 2) the death of Digenis/Akritis, and his struggle with Charos. For a stylistic comparison between *Digenis* and the Akritic songs, see Sifakis, "Ζητήματα ποιητικῆς". On the issue of whether such songs should actually be called "akritic", see Saunier, "Is there such a thing as an 'akritic' song?".

18 Beaton, "Balladry", p. 19, says: "there is little doubt that some, at least, of these songs do preserve memories of Byzantine warfare and, probably, of the male heroic code prevalent between the 8th and the 11th centuries", but he admits that we have "no direct evidence" of their existence during the Middle Ages. According to Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, p. XLVIII, "the earliest written folksong which mentions Digenis is found in a manuscript of ca. 1650".

19 Grégoire, "Le tombeau", pp. 498–99 proposed as a candidate the "turmark" Diogenes, an officer from the Anatolikon theme killed at Kopidnadon in 788.

Spanish Cid Campeador, Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, whose existence is well attested in Old Spanish chronicles.[20]

To be sure, we find in the Byzantine poem a lot of proper names which could be that of historical characters, famous Arab leaders, Armenian personalities, or heretic Paulicians, who sometimes became allied with Byzantium's Arab enemies. But there are few coincident data in E and G, if one excepts the names of the protagonist, Digenis, and his main opponents, the *apelatai* Philopappous, Ioannakis and Kinnamos, the Warrior-Maid Maximou and her lieutenant Melimitzes/Milimitses, whose identification appears just as problematic as that of Digenis.[21] Even the protagonist's genealogy varies according to each version: in E, Digenis' father is called Mousouros, his paternal grandfather Aaron, and his great-grandfather Mouselom; in G, his father remains anonymous, his grandfather is called Chrysoberges, and his great-grandfather Ambron. If Aaron is to be identified with Harun al-Rashid (789–809), the first *ghazi* caliph who regularly participated in the *jihad*,[22] whereas Chrysoberges is an avatar of Chrysocheir, a Paulician leader died ca. 878/9, and Ambron stands for the emir Umar of Melitene, allied with the Paulicians and killed in 863 at the battle of Porson, each version refers to a rather different historical background. But speculation of the kind remains hazardous, and has generated much disagreement among scholars:[23] Jeffreys, who lists in the Name index of her edition the various historical prototypes suggested for each character of the poem, sometimes mentions no less than five alternative identifications for one and the same figure (see for instance Apochalpes, quoted in E 506 as a companion of the Emir)!

As for the many toponyms alluded to in both texts, the ground seems a bit firmer: the material shared by E and G is more important and includes names of various places which played an important role in the history of the Arab-

20 See Badenas de la Peña, "El poema de *Diyenis Acrita*", p. 281. The Cid died at Valencia in 1099.

21 See for instance the connection established between Philopappous and the last king of Commagene (called Philopappos), or the identification of Melimitzes/Milimitses with the Armenian prince Melias/Mleh, governor of Lykandos, died in 934: Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, pp. XXXIII–XXXIV, XXXVIII, with further bibliography.

22 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, pp. 99 and 146.

23 Alexiou, first editor of the Escorial text, and warm supporter of the primacy of the vernacular version of *Digenis*, considers the onomastic data to be more reliable in E than in G (see his *Ἀκριτικά* and the introduction of his *Βασίλειος Διγενής Ἀκρίτης*). But most of the historical identifications he proposed are questionable: see Galatariotou, "The Primacy", pp. 40–43.

Byzantine wars, such as Amorion, sacked by the Arabs in 838[24] (E 258, 732; G 1, 8. 295), Ikonion (E 258. 732; G 1, 8. 295; 4, 1043), Herakleia (E 732. 946; G 1, 50. 294; 4, 41), or Mylokopeia/ Mellokopia, i.e. Malakopea (E 503; G 3, 67). Both texts also agree in presenting Cappadocia as the country of Digenis' maternal family.[25] None the less, each version mentions a significant number of places unknown to the other: E alludes to Lykandos (921) in the Anti-Tauros mountains, to Nikomedia and Prainetos (259), quoted as the further points of the Emir's father's raids; it refers to Emek/ Homs (246), Aleppo (236), Rache/ Raqqa (527. 531), residence of Harun al-Rashid, to Samosata (1320) near the river Euphrates… G mentions Ankyra (1, 11; 2, 77), Aphrike/Tephrike and Taranta (2, 78), two places occupied by the Paulicians, and Podandos (8, 205) in the Cilician gates; it alludes to the Mauronites/ Maurochionites (4, 969; 8, 205), inhabitants of the Black Mountain (Amanus), and to Tarsos (4, 969; 8, 205), which was one of the main centres of the Arab frontier area…[26] Such an abundance of topographical data confers on both texts a semblance of authenticity, but it is difficult to recognize in the various raids or battles alluded to in E or G precise echoes of specific historical episodes ;[27] what we are dealing with is nothing else but blurred, undatable recollections of a distant past, as distorted and fictionalized as the history of the Trojan War in the *Iliad*, or the celebration of the battle of Roncevaux in the *Chanson de Roland*. Makridge rightly calls *Digenis Akritis* a "pseudo-historical" work,[28] using snatches of the past to construct an imaginary world.

The confusion is increased by the coexistence, in this fictional world, of elements belonging to different chronological layers, detached from their historical context and put together to form a composite picture.[29] Whereas most of the story, in the first half of the poem, takes place at the very heart of

24 A vivid memory of the event has been preserved in Byzantine hagiographic literature: the *Tale of the 42 martyrs of Amorium* celebrates the heroic death of the Christian captives resisting apostasy.

25 Cappadocian references are much more numerous in G 1, 7. 56; 3, 106. 248; 4, 42; 5, 18; 7, 2. 107. 112; 8, 204) than in E (1092) where the author is content with calling Digenis "the marvellous Cappadocian".

26 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, p. 150.

27 See for instance the account of the battle in which the Emir took part at Mylokopeia/ Mellokopia (E, 503–12; G, 3.66–76), and the attempt to identify the engagement with the battle of Porson in 863.

28 Makridge, "Not but the Brave", p. 150; on the fictionality of *Digenis Akritis* see also Cupane, "Una passeggiata", pp. 63–69.

29 Jeffreys, "Byzantium's Epic Past", p. 449 speaks of a "homeostatic" perspective that "telescopes major events of the past in accordance with the preconceptions of the present".

Anatolia, in Cappadocia, and the events and characters alluded to point predominantly to the 8th and 9th centuries, the setting in the second half of the narrative moves to the East, on the Euphrates' bank, in a region (the Commagene) the Byzantines did not reconquer before the 10th century, and the peace Digenis is supposed to have brought to Romania (E 1691–92. 1790–91; G 7, 1–7. 215–29; 8, 224–27) evokes the golden age of *reconquista*, when almost all Asia Minor belonged to the Byzantine empire. The account in G of Digenis' encounter with an emperor called Basil, who could be Basil I (867–86) or Basil II Bulgaroktonos (976–1025), points indiscriminately to the 9th or 10th century, and the presence, in Digenis' maternal genealogy, of members of the Doukas family (E 137; G 4, 43. 59), which played a major role in Byzantine history from the end of the 9th century onwards, may also imply the superimposition of several chronological layers. The story of Digenis' maternal grandfather, "in exile as a punishment" (E 140; G 1, 270), reminds one of the rebellion of Andronikos Doukas and his son Constantine in the early 10th century, but the prestige attached in G to the Doukas name[30] also seems to reflect the prominent status acquired by this aristocratic family in the 12th century, when it became related by marriage to the Komnenian emperors.

Although the versatility of most "historical" references in *Digenis* makes the text difficult to exploit from a historical point of view, the work is often quoted by the historians of Byzantium as a source about the frontier life in the middle-Byzantine period, in areas such as Syria, Cilicia, or Mesopotamia;[31] the presence in the poem of administrative terms such as "theme" (military district), *strategos* (military governor), or *toparches* (provincial governor) reflects the mid-Byzantine organization of the Eastern frontier area, even if the poet uses these technical words in a rather loose way.[32] Digenis, whose surname "Akritis" assimilates to the *akritai* described in Byzantine sources as soldiers stationed on the frontier or as frontier commanders in charge of the supervision of the border area, symbolizes the warrior spirit of a profoundly militarized society, close to that described in the late 10th-century treatise *On Skirmishing* (*De velitatione*), which Ševčenko calls a "prose counterpart" to *Digenis Akritis.*[33]

Digenis' "double ancestry" suggests to see the frontier area not only as a zone of conflict, but also as a place of heavy exchange between the Christian

30 In G the Girl's family belongs to the same Doukas lineage as Digenis himself, so that they are akin (4.323–25, 6.14 and 414).

31 Ševčenko, "Constantinople", pp. 727–35, quotes *Digenis* as a source for the "third zone" of the Byzantine empire.

32 See Oikonomides, "L'épopée de Digénis", pp. 381–89.

33 Ševčenko, "Constantinople", p. 732. On the *akritai*, see also Pertusi, "Tra storia e leggenda".

and Islamic worlds:[34] in these fringe countries, apostasy and cross-cultural interaction were indeed frequent phenomena during the Arab-Byzantine wars and in the following period, when Byzantium was in conflict with the Seljuk sultanate.[35] Digenis' father, who becomes a renegade for the love of a Byzantine girl, and then prompts his whole kin to convert to Christianity, is a highly symbolical figure of the mixed world at the frontier. A high degree of familiarity had developed in these regions of mutual acculturation between the Byzantines and those "from the other side".[36] The way Muslisms are alluded to in the poem, with a mix of hostility and familiarity, is highly characteristic of the "Akritic" mind, that considered Arabs both as enemies and brothers. In *Digenis* Christians and Muslims treat each other as σκυλί / σκύλος ("cur") (E 29. 113. 129), they both suspect the others of disloyalty (E 354; G 2, 162–69), Muslims call Christians "pig-eaters" (E 269; G 2, 82), and Byzantines are prone to accuse Arabs of cruelty (E 113–15; G 1, 239) and insensibility (G 2, 24–25).[37] But Digenis' father, the Emir, though described as polygamous before his conversion and marriage to the Byzantine girl, is portrayed in a very flattering way in the Escorial text, and even more in the Grottaferrata version, where such a positive characterization is at variance with the derogative terms "Agarenes" and "Ismaelites" used by the author to refer to the Arabs, thus stigmatized as descendants of Ismael (born of Abraham and his servant Agar) and even called the "offspring of slaves" (G 7, 208). This inner contradiction may reflect the blended feeling of otherness and familiarity experienced by the Byzantine

34 On the frontier motif as a common element between Byzantine and Castillan epics, see Badenas de la Peña, "El poema de Diyenis", pp. 276–81 and 284–87, and Ayensa Prat, "O Διγενής", pp. 181–84.

35 For the period of the Arab-Byzantine wars, see Dagron, "Formes et fonctions", p. 256; for the Seljuk period (11th–13th centuries), Beihammer, "Defection", pp. 614–17 ("Christian frontier lords turning to Islam, ca. 1050–118") and pp. 630–32 ("Local rebels collaborating with the enemy, 1118–260").

36 Dagron, "Formes et fonctions", p. 255, quotes *Digenis* as an example of the interferences which took place between the Byzantine and the Arab worlds, and gave the fighters on each side of the frontier one and the same way of thinking; he refers to *Digenis* again to show the mutual fascination that existed between Byzantines and Arabs, and considers the invention of Digenis, the "Two-Blood", as expressing a reconciliation fantasy; in picturing Digenis displaying his bravery against wild beasts, Amazons, or outlaws, the Byzantine poem transforms the frontier area into a sort of dreamy land, which Dagron, "Les Arabes, ennemis intimes", pp. 361–62, calls a "royaume autonome de guerriers sans guerre, qui a rompu avec les Empires rivaux".

37 Digenis' father goes so far as to appropriate the anti-Arab discourse, once in love with a girl from the opposite side (E, 170).

frontiersmen before the Arabs, but perhaps it also betrays the coexistence of inherited ethnic stereotypes in sharp contrast with everyday practices.[38]

The same tension is to be found in the antithetical description of the frontier area as a lawless, dangerous place, and as a paradisiacal setting. An abode of wild beasts (lions, dragons) and various kinds of bandits, the "Akritic" world appears as insecure, infested with rebels (*ataktoi*), brigands (*lestai*), irregular troops of *apelatai* ("guerillas", according to Jeffreys' translation), who are both soldiers and outlaws, spending most of their time hunting, cattle-thieving and bride-snatching. To put it briefly, the frontier area is a kind a "Far East", a hostile place where life is constantly endangered.[39] The fact that the *apelatai* (i.e Christian bandits, not Arabs[40]) play the part of chief opponents of Digenis the Frontiersman can be seen as a hallmark of the profoundly anomic character of the borderland.[41]

However, this frightening "Far East" is also depicted as a *locus amoenus*, where Digenis enjoys the pleasures of love with the charming daughter of the general Doukas (G 6, 15–41) and where he builds a splendid palace, near the river Euphrates, in the middle of a delightful paradise (E 1620–94; G 7, 8–108). Both texts insist on the magnificence of Digenis' estate, which can be seen as a literary transposition of the richness of the Byzantine provincial nobility.[42] The episode of Digenis' encounter with the emperor, present in G only, bears an interesting witness to another characteristic of the aristocracy in these remote countries, its spirit of independence, and its distant stance towards the central power. Digenis, who is depicted throughout the poem with nearly imperial attributes, addresses the emperor, who has come to visit him, with a curious mix of loyalty and distrust, deference and caution, which suggests that an implicit rivalry between centre and periphery is at the core of the episode:

38 Cf. Beihammer, "Defection", p. 647.

39 On this see Ott, "Byzantine Wild East", as well as her chapter in this volume, pp. 285–312.

40 See their repeated allusions to God's power (E 1289–90. 1333; G 6, 347–50. 399–400).

41 According to Conca, "Bisanzio e i barbari", p. 90, Digenis himself bears the mark of the anomic frontier mentality: his name suggests the contradictions of a life oscillating between "virtù e licenza, coraggio e soperchieria, fede e debolezza, barbarie (testified, in G, by the rape of the Aplorabdes' daughter) e humanitas". Conca reads Digenis' solitude as a testimony of "integrazione mancata".

42 Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace", pp. 142–45, describes Digenis' estate as the "epitome of an oriental palace". On Digenis' palace in the G and Z versions, see also Cupane, "Traumpaläste", pp. 422–27: without denying the existence of oriental elements in the description of the Byzantine epics, Cupane also points out various similarities between Akritis' estate and aristocratic Contantinopolitan palaces such as Botaneiates' and (in Z) Solomon's temple, as described in George the Monk's chronicle.

he begins by refusing rather condescendingly the gift offered by the *basileus*, then he makes a great show of bravery in front of his imperial visitor, and eventually lectures him about the duties of his charge! His attitude has often been compared to that of Kekaumenos, another representative of the peripheral world, who in his *Strategicon* (ca. 1075–78) advises *toparchai* (provincial governors) to "remain at a safe distance from the throne and from the capital".[43]

If the original version of *Digenis Akritis* has been composed, as it has often been argued, among the refugees from Central and Eastern Anatolia who settled in Constantinople after the Turkish victory of Manzikert in 1071, such a picture of a now lost, independent frontier world must be marked by a strong element of nostalgia.[44] A refugee could have conceived the idea of transforming the oral folk-material of his native country into a literary work,[45] perhaps under the influence of Western *chansons de geste*, which the Byzantines must have been able to discover thanks to the increased East-West contacts brought about by the Crusades;[46] they may have felt anxious to create a hero of their own, a typically medieval character, meant to replace the Achilles-like figures inherited from the classical past.

The Anatolian campaigns conducted against the Seljuk sultanate by Alexios I (1081–118), John II (1118–43), and Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80), whose military successes were bombastically celebrated by court poets, may

43 Ševčenko, "Constantinople", p. 728. Cf. *Strategikon*, 5, 218 (ed. M.D. Spadaro, *Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo*, Alessandria 1998 pp. 232–33): ἐὰν εἰς ἰδίαν χώραν κάστρα τυχὸν ἢ χωρία ἔχῃς, εἶ δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς τοπάρχης καὶ ἐξουσιαστής, μή σε πλανήσῃ πλοῦτος ἢ ἀξιώματα ἢ ὑποσχέσεις μεγάλαι τῶν βασιλέων καὶ δώῃς τὴν χώραν σου βασιλεῖ καὶ ἀντ᾽ αὐτῆς λάβῃς χρήματα καὶ κτήματα, εἰ καὶ τετραπλασίονα μέλλεις λαβεῖν, ἀλλὰ ἔχε τὴν χώραν σου κἂν μικρὰ καὶ οὐδαμινή ἐστι· κρεῖττον γάρ σοί ἐστιν εἶναί σε φίλον αὐτεξούσιον ἢ δοῦλον καὶ ὑπεξούσιον ("If you happen to possess fortresses and estates in your own country, if you are a toparch and exercise authority there, do not be deceived by the emperors' wealth, dignities, or great promises so that you give away your country to the emperor and get in exchange money and properties, even if you may get four times as much; but keep your country, were it small and worthless: for it is better for you to be an independent friend than a slave, subject to some one else's power"). On Kekaumenos and *Digenis*, see also Galatariotou, "Open Space".

44 Cf. Beaton, "Cappadocians at Court".

45 See Cupane, "Wie volkstümlich?", pp. 581–84: the author emphasizes the experimental character of such a literary achievement.

46 Cf. Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, p. XVII. – On the other hand, the possibility that the author of the Ur-Digenis came also into contact with the emerging Arabic epic can by no means be excluded: see on this topic Ott, "Byzantine Wild East", as well as her chapter in this volume.

have contributed to an increasing interest in Digenis' story[47] – especially in the second half of the 12th century, when the Byzantines temporarily reconquered Eastern territories that were the very field of Akritis' exploits. The Grottaferrata version, whose special link with the aristocratic and warlike *ethos* of the Komnenian dynasty has often been emphasized, could have been composed at that time.[48] The presence in the *Ptochoprodromic poem* quoted in the opening of the present paper of verbal echoes of the G text[49] suggests that Ptochoprodromos was alluding to a recent rewriting of *Digenis*, when he compared the emperor Manuel I to a "new Akritis".

A Controversial Literary Categorization

Although *Digenis Akritis* is often refered to as an "epic", its generic classification is in fact highly problematic.[50] In the second prologue which introduces the story of Digenis' boyhood, both authors of E and G adopt a polemical stance towards ancient epic, and oppose their own claim to veracity to Homer's men-

47 A recent paper by De Medeiros Publio Dias, "La construcción" interprets *Digenis* as a literary construction meant to legitimate Alexios' ambition to reconquer the lost Anatolian territories.

48 See Galatariotou, "Structural Oppositions"; Magdalino, "Honour among Romaioi" and "*Digenes Akrites* and Byzantine Literature". On the link between past and present as a main component of epic writing, see Goyet, *Penser sans concept,* p. 33: l'épopée "articule intimement le passé au présent de l'action"; p. 336: "Même si les épopées charrient des éléments anciens, c'est le monde des auditeurs qu'elles décrivent pour l'essentiel". According to Derive, *L'Épopée*, p. 175, the *Chanson de Roland* is more instructive about the values of chivalry and the ideology of crusade in the 11th–12th centuries than about the Spanish wars of Charlemagne. Past is used and rewritten in order to explain the present: Goyet, *Penser sans concept*, pp. 321–47, sees in Charlemagne's war against the Moors a metaphor of the 11th-century crisis.

49 The references to Akritis adjusting his kilts and taking his stick (l. 190: καὶ τὰς ποδεάς του νὰ ἔμπηξεν, νὰ ἐπῆρεν τὸ ῥαβδίν του, "let's hope he tucks his kilts and seizes his stick") is reminiscent of G 4, 116/1058 (καὶ τὰς ποδέας ὀχυρῶς πήξας εἰς τὸ ζωνάριν, "and tucking his kilts firmly into his belt") and 119 (μηδὲν ἐπιφερόμενος εἰ μὴ λιτὸν ῥαβδίτζιν, "although he carried nothing except a simple stick"); the term ἀγουρίτσης ("young lad") used in the following line of the *Ptochoprodromic poem* also occurs in G 4, 163. 320. 438; it does not appear in the E text. Eideneier, *Ptochoprodromos*, pp. 26–27, compares the "Mischstil" of the poem to the style of G.

50 Beaton, "An Epic in the Making", p. 65, speaks of a "hybrid" work, Theologitis, "*Digénis Akritas* et la littérature byzantine", p. 396, says it is "unclassifiable".

dacity.[51] The presence of the same authorial metadiscourse in the two oldest versions of *Digenis* seems to imply that the element of rivalry with the Homeric poems already appeared in the *Urtext*: it must have been a distinctive feature of the original work, conceived as a *geste* of the Byzantine successor of the celebrated heroes of ancient Greece. In G, Digenis chooses to decorate his palace on the Euphrates with mosaics illustrating, among other things, "Achilles' legendary wars, the beauty of Agamemnon, the deadly slaughter, wise Penelope, the suitors who were slain, Odysseus' marvellous daring against the Cyclops" (7, 85–88): such a series of Homeric figures, forming a gallery of exemplary ancestors, suggests the part played by the ancient epic model in Digenis' and his author's mental world.[52]

The influence of the epic tradition is apparent in many passages of the Byzantine poem, mainly in the battle scenes where Digenis easily triumphes over all his enemies, the whole troop of *apelatai* and its three leaders, Philopappous, Kinnamos, and Ioannakis, Maximou the Warrior-Maid and her lieutenant Melimitzes. The marked tendency to amplification noticeable in such episodes,[53] the presence of several arming scenes,[54] the frequency of animal comparisons (assimilation of the bandits to sheeps, vultures, or dogs, of Digenis to a lion, or an eagle[55]), the almost anatomical descriptions of the blows inflicted by the hero to his adversaries[56] are all typical features of the epic style.

Nevertheless Digenis deviates from the epic norm in several aspects. A first anomaly in the Byzantine hero's portrait is his liking for solitude, heavily stressed in both E and G: the two versions depict Digenis as a lonely warrior,

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51 E 718–22; G 4, 27–36. On the motif of Homer's lies – perhaps to be understood as a controversial attitude against Homeric philology, in full expansion in the 12th century, see Lassithiotakis, "Παύσασθε γράφειν Ὅμηρον …".

52 On these mosaics, whose figures represent "la transposition sur le plan mythique de Digénis et des valeurs dont il est porteur", see Odorico, "*Ἅπερ εἰσὶν ψευδέα*", pp. 34 and 42–45.

53 See for instance the motif of a single combat against numerous enemies, which occurs in E 876–80. 1323–24. 1509–10. 1733–34. 1748–49; G 4, 464–66. 637–44. 696–97; 6, 167–68, etc. Mirabile, *Digénis Akritas*, pp. 193–97, also underlines the place given in *Digenis* to the wonderful element.

54 G 4, 114–18. 219–28; 6, 552–56. 715–18. 735–39; E 10–17. 1461–65. 1486–96.

55 G 5, 180; 6, 145. 240–42; E 966–67, 1511–14. One can find the same kind of images in the first part of the poem (Lay of the Emir): E 33–34; G 1, 173–74.

56 See the depiction of Digenis splitting Maximou's horse through the middle (G, 6.760–63; E, 1558–59).

"campione di un individualismo senza limiti".[57] Such a singularity puts the Frontiersman at a distance from the "socialization" Derive considers as a main element in the definition of an epic character.[58] It seems indeed rather difficult to see Digenis as a "national hero", while being so completely devoid of collective sense. To be sure, both G and E contain praises of their protagonist as a defender of Romania, victor over the Arabs and pacifier of the Eastern border of the Byzantine Empire,[59] but these allusions to exploits accomplished on the behalf of the Christian community are confined to the margins of the work (to transitional lines, summarizing events of the past); they do not belong to the main plot, where Digenis' chief adversaries are not Arabs, but the Girl's kinsmen, lions, dragons, and *apelatai*. In the Byzantine poem it is not the fight against the Infidels, as in the *Chanson de Roland*, but bride-snatching that forms the core of the narrative,[60] and the author appears so well-informed about the subtleties of elopment and abduction that his work may seem more informative about the status of women in Byzantine society than about the military history of the Empire![61]

Because of the emphasis put on the love theme, one could see our text as closer to the erotic novel than to epic.[62] E and G agree in picturing the fate of the Emir, "conquered" by a charming Byzantine girl, as an illustration of the power of love;[63] both versions introduce Digenis' story with general considerations about love (G 4, 4–18; E 702–17); both present love as the main source of the Frontiersman's heroism: for he fights against the dragon, the *apelatai*, and Maximou in order to defend the Girl, as he explicitly acknowledges on the verge of dying, when he recapitulates his most heroic deeds and presents love as the leading motif in his life (E 1790–92; G 8, 69–122). In both texts, Digenis proclaims a romantic Creed – "Those whom God has joined, man shall not

57 Maltese, "Un eroe di frontiera", p. IX. Mirabile, *Digénis Akritas*, p. 11, also insisting on this characteristic of Digenis, says he lives "une existence de l'altérité et de la marginalité". On his liking for solitude, see G 4, 956–59; 5, 26; 6, 288–89; E 630. 793. 1088. 1096. 1299–301. 1740.

58 See Derive, *L'Épopée*, pp. 143–44: the epic hero belongs to a group, and behaves as its ideal representative; he never acts solitarily.

59 E, 1609–14, 1691–92, 1709–14, 1790–91. In G the same motif is introduced in the prologue (1.1–12), and reappears in 5.199–201, 7.1–7, 8.223–27, 8.249–61.

60 See Makridge, "Not but the Brave", pp. 152–53.

61 Laiou, "Sex, Consent, and Coercion", pp. 202–06 and 213–15, repeatedly refers to *Digenis*.

62 See Trapp, "*Digenes Akrites*, Epos oder Roman ?". Cupane, "Una passeggiata", pp. 63–69, interestingly argues that the author of *Digenis* used the "historiographical paradigm" and the *veritas-topos* in order to legitimate his romantic discourse about the power of Love.

63 E 175–77. 213–16. 362–64; G 1, 297–300. 335–37; 4, 18–47.

separate" (G 6, 143; E 1170. 1305. 1573) – borrowed from a passage of Matthew the evangelist (19.6) underlining the indissolubility of marriage. The same sentence also appears in two of the classicizing Komnenian novels,[64] perhaps influenced by the Byzantine poem, for the *Ur-Digenis* must be prior to the renaissance of the novelistic genre in Byzantium.[65] Nevertheless it seems links already existed between the original version of *Digenis* and the ancient novel, for both E and G include various echoes from Achilles Tatius, which must have featured in their common ancestor – e. g. in descriptions of meadows and gardens[66] (E 1087–88. 1657–58; G 6, 18–28; 7, 14–41). As a matter of fact, ancient novels were popular in Byzantium well before the 12th century, as testified by Photios' summaries in the *Biblioteca*, by Psellos' comparative essay on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius, and by the great amount of *excerpta* from the Greek novelists present in gnomic collections, that could have served as a source for several allusions to Achilles Tatius in the *Ur-Digenis*. In the Grottaferrata version, probably posterior to at least some of the Komnenian novels, the novelistic element has been noticeably developed, and the dialogue with ancient Greek texts, and possibly with 12th-century novels too, becomes prominent, e.g. in the outward descriptions of characters, in the many rhetorical laments, or the picture of emotions, depending on the novelistic topos of conflicting feelings.[67]

But the author of *Digenis* deviates from the rules of both novel and epic in narrating the entire biography of his hero,[68] from birth to death, and even his pre-history, for the main function of the Lay of the Emir is to explain Digenis' "Two-Blood" quality, just as the "Nectanebus novella" in the *Alexander Romance* helps to present Alexander as a hero of "double descent", born from the adultery of queen Olympias with the Egyptian magician and ex-pharaoh Nectanebus. Markopoulos placed Digenis' story in the continuity of historical biography, rising by the mid-10th century, and he insisted upon the parallels existing between the Byzantine poem and the Life of Basil I, founder of the Macedonian dynasty, for this text also develops the motif of cynegetic

64 Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, 9, 298–300, ed. F. Conca, Il Romanzo bizantino del 12 secolo, Turin 1994, p. 292; Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charicles*, 3, 12 and 7, 264, ed. ibid., pp. 346 and 460 respectively.

65 See Beaton, "La fortune", p. 25; Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 9, 15, 27 n. 24, 41 n. 63, 48 n. 78, 49 n. 81, on possible echoes of *Digenis* in the 12th-century novels.

66 Cf. Achilles Tatius, 1.1,5 (painting representing Europe's abduction in a meadow), 1.15,1–8 (Clitophon's garden with parrots).

67 Jouanno, *Digénis Akritas*, pp. 142–43 and 145–49.

68 See Moennig, "The Late-Byzantine Romance", p. 10.

exploits.[69] But another kind of biographies, that of holy men, was extremely popular in Byzantium, and the hagiographic influence appears pervasive in the Grottaferrata version, where one can find echoes from various saints' lives – *Life of St Theodoros* in the account of Digenis' fight against the dragon and his encounter with the emperor, or *Life of St Theoktiste of Lesbos* in the episode of Haplorabdes' daughter.[70]

In both versions of the poem, Christian material plays an important part, in the Lay of the Emir as well as in Digenis' story. In the Lay, the Emir's conversion to Christianity has brought about the insertion of long passages of religious controversy – reproaches of the Emir's mother scandalized by his renunciation of Islam, and a proselytizing discourse of the Emir vaunting the merits of Christianity with so great an enthusiasm that he persuades his mother to convert.[71] Then, both versions agree in presenting Digenis' exploits as a result of God's blessing (E 781–84. 811–13. 1746–47; G 1, 1–29; 3, 339–42; 4, 146–51. 188–89, etc.); both underline his devotion to military saints:[72] Theodoros, whom the E redactor calls "the great *apelates*" (E 891; G 1, 21; 4, 477. 907; 6, 700; 7, 105) and, in G exclusively, George the dragon slayer (1, 23; 6, 701) and Demetrios (1, 25; 6,

69 Markopoulos, "Ὁ Διγενὴς Ἀκρίτας καὶ ἡ βυζαντινὴ χρονογραφία".

70 See Trapp, "Hagiographische Elemente". Moennig, "Biographical Arrangement", p. 139, notes that "in Byzantine times biography reigned supreme primarily by the virtue of the dominance of the genre of saints' lives", and he also remarks that the Byzantine audience perceived saints' lives and biographies of secular heroes "as belonging to the same narrative tradition" (ibid., p. 127).

71 In both texts the Emir's conversion is mentioned very briefly (E 175–77; G, 1, 303–06); but religious controversy takes a notable place in the following exchanges between the Emir and his mother: see the reproaches of the mother (E 244–53. 269–70. 284–91. 535–41; G 2, 53–98; 3, 138–57) and the Emir's plea for Christianity (E 543–59; G 3, 160–98). In G the latter passage is much developed, for the author has put into the Emir's mouth a paraphrase of the Nicene Creed (3, 171–95); then, he devotes almost fifty lines to describing the reaction of the Emir's mother, her conversion, and that of the Emir's other kinsmen (3, 199–245). The corresponding passage in E is much briefer (560–65). On the influence exerted in this episode by the literature of Islamo-Christian apologetics, and the presence in the versified Creed of G of a paraphrase of the *Ritual of abjuration of the Muslim faith* (an early 10th-century text preserved in the *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei* of Niketas Choniates, *Patrologia graeca*, 140, 124–36), see Argyriou, "L'épopée de Digénis Akritas", pp. 18–30.

72 On the influence of the warrior saint model upon Digenis' portrait, see Elizbarashvili, "The Formation of a Hero", pp. 449–54. The place given to military saints in *Digenis*, especially in the G version, can be seen as a sign of the militarization of the Komnenian society, according to Cortes Arrese, "Heroes", pp. 254–58, who underlines the role of St Demetrios as a defender of Christian faith and protector of the integrity of the Byzantine empire.

701). Both texts also put Digenis' love for the general's daughter under divine patronage (E 1170. 1304–07. 1573; G 6, 142–43); both include a set of quotations from Job, the Psalms, and even liturgical texts such as the *Office of Blessing of Water on Epiphany*;[73] both reproduce in full the Girl's prayer for Digenis' recovery in the final agony episode (E 1808–60; G 8, 145–80).

The choice of a biographical arrangement has induced the authors of both versions to conclude Digenis' story with a meditation on the fugacity of life.[74] However, the motif of the vanity of the world is much more developed in G, where the Christian, moralizing tone is so conspicuous that Elizbarashvili considers Christianity as "the ideological axis of the poem".[75] The place allowed in the mosaics of Digenis' palace for Biblical episodes borrowed from the lives of Moses, Joshua, Samson, and David reveals the importance attached to religious feelings in this version of the poem, as does Digenis' choice of constructing a sanctuary dedicated to St Demetrios right in the centre of his palace. Whereas the Emir in G is twice compared with Samson (2, 200; 4, 24), the influence of the Davidic model seems implicit in several episodes of Digenis' story, especially his two adulteries with Haplorabdes' daughter and the Warrior-Maid Maximou, for G in both passages insistently depicts his hero under the guise of a sinner and a penitent, i.e in the very role David was meant to exemplify in Byzantine edifying literature.[76] It is probably the influence of the Davidic paradigm that explains what Penninck considers as failures in Digenis' biography, his "unkept promises" to the Girl, his transgression of humane and divine law, and the childlessness he endures as a divine punishment.[77] Another disconcerting element in Digenis' life, namely his progressive isolation from his

73 See Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, pp. XLIII–XLIV.

74 E 1695–706; G 8, 1–6 and 211–313.

75 Elizbarashvili, "The Formation of a Hero", p. 458. On the strong tendency of G to gnomic moralization, see Jeffreys, "Byzantium's Epic Past", p. 447. On the transformation of Digenis' biography into a story "beneficial to the soul" (*psychopheles*), see Jouanno, *Digénis Akritas*, pp. 167–86. G even concludes with a prayer of the author for the eternal salvation of his hero and readership!

76 Cf. John Climacus alluding to David as a model of repentance and humility in his *Scale of Paradise* (25th degree), ed. *Patrologia graeca* 88, 1001 b, with reference to 2 Sam. 12, 13: "Ἡμάρτηκα τῷ Κυρίῳ, ποτὲ ἡ μακαρία ταπείνωσις πρὸς Θεὸν ὑπὲρ μοιχείας καὶ φόνου ἐβόησε, καὶ θᾶττον ἤκουσε· Κύριος ἀφεῖλε τὸ ἁμάρτημά σου". ("I committed a sin against the Lord, the blessed humility cried out to God concerning adultery and murder, and it soon heard: The Lord has removed your sin.).

77 Penninck, "Two Heroes", p. 52, underlining the differences between father and son, finds a "tragic touch" in Digenis' life, and interprets it as a story of deceived expectations, for the son proves unworthy of his exemplary father.

family, which Penninck contrasts with the Emir's continued effort to bind the two Muslim and Byzantine families together, must probably be explained as a variation on the hagiographic motif of escape out of the world, and confirms the influence the highly prized model of the holy man exerted upon the characterization of the Two-Blood hero. As for Digenis' "unheroic death", far from the battlefield, Elizbarashvili is probably right in interpreting it as the peaceful end of a "hero seeking the way to spiritual salvation".[78]

Another element in G reveals the strong religious stance adopted by a redactor much preoccupied with moralization and didacticism, that is the treatment reserved to the traditional epic motif of heroic boasting.[79] Here the E and G versions differ profoundly, for the author of E does not show any embarrassment in developing such a topic,[80] while the author of G seems obsessed by the anathema launched in the Bible against arrogance – indeed the sentence "The Lord resists the proud" (Proverbs-LXX, 3.34: Κύριος ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται) recurs again and again in spiritual florilegia, and Byzantine commentaries on the *Iliad* firmly disapprove of the Homeric characters' φιλαυτία.[81] That is why Digenis, when boasting of his bravery, takes in G so many rhetorical precautions and is always careful about associating God with his own victories (6.149–51, 596–602).

The problematic coexistence of Christian rule with the epic code of heroic behaviour is characteristic of a work whose author seems to have been attracted to heterogenous literary models, and unable (or unwilling) to choose between different possible paths – epic or hagiography, novel or biography. It is tempting to interpret the versatility of the Byzantine poem as an example of the "holistic" character of the epic genre which, according to Boutet, tends to integrate "tout ce qui est à sa portée", so that a society is able to express through epic what constitutes "son essence la plus intime".[82] Digenis could thus be considered as a figure emblematic of Medieval Greece, a literary character personifying the divided self of the *homo byzantinus*. It is perhaps not a matter of pure chance, that such a character took shape around the 11th and 12h

78 Elizbarashvili, "The Formation of a Hero", pp. 456–60.

79 See Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, pp. 326–27; Jouanno, "*Digénis Akritas*, épopée chrétienne?", pp. 383–87.

80 See, for instance, the episode of Digenis' visit to the *apelatai*, where boasting has pride of place (E 671–76. 688).

81 Pontani, "The First Byzantine Commentary", p. 582.

82 Boutet, *La Chanson de geste*, pp. 205 and 101. See also Martin, "Epic as a Genre", p. 18: "Epic is hugely ambitious, undertaking to articulate the most essential aspects of a culture, from its origin stories to its ideals of social behaviour, social structure, relationship to the natural world and to the supernatural <...> It is a mode of total communication".

centuries, at the very time when a new Byzantine consciousness of identity was coming out, whose emergence was probably encouraged by the intensified confrontation with the Western world.

Brief Survey on the Posterity of Digenis' Story

The literary success of *Digenis Akritis* is attested by the existence of several late rewritings, which all depend upon the lost Z version, composed, as mentioned above, of material derived from G and E, sewn together in order to constitute an "exhaustive" collection of Digenis' adventures. Stemming from this early 16th–century compilation, the Trebizond, Andros, Prose, and Oxford versions are Post-Byzantine works, written in the late 16th and 17th centuries;[83] they offer to the modern reader an interesting selection of stylistic variations on one and the same text, for two of them are composed in unrhymed political verses, like the oldest G and E versions, while another is a prose rewriting, and the last one an adaptation in rhymed fifteen-syllable lines. As Kechagioglou remarks, *Digenis* is "one of the very few works which have been tried in all main forms of expression of vernacular Byzantine and Post-Byzantine literature", and this clearly points to its "continuing vitality".[84] The addition in these late rewritings of an "astrological prologue" devoted to Digenis' mother, whom the redactor depicts spending her girlhood days in seclusion because of a prophecy foretelling her abduction by an Emir, shows the links existing between the Late Byzantine versions of the epic and the Palaiologan romances, especially *Livistros and Rodamne.*[85] In a paper focused on the Andros text, Theologitis puts to the fore many intertextual references which confirm the influence that the vernacular fictions of love and adventure exerted upon the Akritic material.[86] The appearance in the Z family of allusions to the story of Alexander

83 Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, pp. xxi–xxii, dates the now lost Trebizond manuscript in the late 16th or early 17th century, and the Andros version in the mid-17th century; the Prose version was written by Meletios Vlastos in 1632, and the Oxford version by Ignatios Petritzes in 1670.

84 Kechagioglou, "*Digenes Akrites* in Prose", p. 120.

85 On the insertion of a life of Digenis' mother into the biographical structure of Digenis' story, see Moennig, "Biographical Arrangement", pp. 131–33.

86 Theologitis, "La solitude du héros", pp. 265–72. The intertextual game contributes to the amplifying process pointed out by Theologitis.

the Great (scarce in G, and totally missing in E) also suggests new connections between the late versions of *Digenis* and the *Alexander Romance*.[87]

The places where our six manuscripts of *Digenis Akritis* were copied strengthen the idea of an important dissemination. Transcribed in Terra d'Otranto, the Grottaferrata version testifies to the presence of the Byzantine epic in South Italy around 1300.[88] The Andros version, the Prose and Oxford texts, both written in the island of Chios, are witnesses to the work's diffusion in rather peripheric areas of the Greek world. Digenis' adventures also became known to the Slavic world through a Russian adaptation, *Devgeni*, which might have been completed during the 14th century, and is characterized by a merging of Akritic material with fairy-tale motifs.[89] Echoes from *Digenis Akritis* have also been detected in the Turkish folk tale of Köroglu, and perhaps even in Boccaccio's *Teseida*.[90] In Greece proper, where the interaction between the epic and the Palaiologan romances was two-way, so that *Digenis* influenced several Late Byzantine fictions (*Livistros*, *Velthandros*, the *Achilleid*,[91] Theodore Meliteniotes' allegorical poem *To Chastity*, and also late rewritings of the *Alexander Romance*) before being influenced in return by the same texts,[92] the fame of the Two-Blood Border Lord was also sustained by the existence of folksongs, and this helps to explain why Digenis could be raised to the rank of national hero in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the Greeks conceived the "Great Idea" of reconquerring the lost Hellenic territories of Asia Minor, and again, during the Second World War, when Digenis came to embody resistance to the foreign occupation of Greece.[93]

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87 On the relationship between *Digenis* and the *Alexander Romance*, see Moennig, "Digenes = Alexander?".

88 See Jeffreys, "The Grottaferrata Version", pp. 28–29.

89 Translation by Arrignon in Odorico, *L'Akrite*, pp. 169–225; on the old Russian adaptation of *Digenis* in comparison with the Greek original, see Rizzo Nervo, "Per l'interpretazione del *Digenis*".

90 Cf. Kyriakidis, "Τὸ ἔπος τοῦ Διγενῆ" and Kahane, "Akritas and Arcita".

91 In the *Achilleid*, which is the most "akriticized" of all Palaiologan romances, various episodes of Achilles' life are modelled upon Digenis' story: see Lassithiotakis, "Achille et Digénis" and the chapter by R. Lavagnini in this volume, p. 245.

92 See Cupane, "Traumpaläste", pp. 436–37, about *Digenis* and Meliteniotes' poem *To Chastity*.

93 Cf. Beaton, "La fortune", pp. 29–32; Jouanno, *Digénis Akritas*, pp. 27–30.

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CHAPTER 11

Shared Spaces: 2 Cross-border Warriors in the Arabian Folk Epic[1]

Claudia Ott

1 The Arabian Folk Epic

Arabian Folk Epic (in Arabic *sīra shaʿbiyya*) is the generic term for some dozen heroic tales of enormous length, the longest of them consisting of up to 81 printed volumes and almost 12,000 pages in manuscript form, the average length being about 3,000 manuscript pages, with none covering less than 500 pages.[2] The total number of texts belonging to the genre is not entirely clear. Up to now, we know of approximately ten 'major' epics and 20 'minor' ones – defined by their extent and degree of popularity. Each epic is centered on the life and deeds of a specific hero, often a historical character (e.g. the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim in the *Sīrat al-Ḥākim*), his ancestors and offspring, or a group of heroes – e.g. the *mujāhidūn* (holy warriors) in the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*. Female heroes and warrior women also often appear.[3] The heroes are usually affiliated with a specific Arabic tribe (e.g. the Banū Hilāl in the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*), which in a tribal context allows the epic to create tribal identity. In a broader social context, any self-identification is usually to Islam, while the 'others' are its enemies, very often Christians, such as Byzantines and Franks. The oldest reliable testimonies of Arabian epics date from the 12th century, although the genre probably began to develop much earlier.[4] One of the significant early references is given by Samawʾal Ibn Yaḥyā al-Maghribī, a Jew converted to Islam in 558/1163, who mentions the "big *dīwāns*",[5] among them a *Dīwān aḫbār*

1 My cordial thanks goes to the Dr. Giesing-Foundation, Hanover, for a generous grant that helped to make this article possible. Thanks also go to Prof. Ruth Bottigheimer, Stony Brook University, New York, for the English version of the translated *sīra* quotations and for revising the English of the article, and to Prof. Remke Kruk, University of Leiden, for helpful notes and comments.

2 Ott, *Metamorphosen des Epos*, p. 21.

3 Most recently, Remke Kruk has devoted a thorough analysis to the phenomenon of warrior women in Arabian epic: Kruk, *Warrior Women*.

4 Ott, *Metamorphosen des Epos*, pp. 45–50; Heath, *The Thirsty Sword*, pp. 27–30.

5 The term *dīwān* occurs regularly in the titles of shorter stories or adventures taken from a greater *sīra shaʿbiyyah,* e.g. *Dīwān al-Hiraql* (The *dīwān* of Heraclius) of the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl,*

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ʿAntara and a *Dīwān D̲ī l-Himma wa-l-Baṭṭāl* among the works he took pleasure in reading when he was between ten and 13 years of age.[6] Most other references from 12th–15th centuries denigrate the epics as works without any literary value, and advise people not to read them. The oldest dated manuscripts of Arabian epics are from around 1400 AD. Among them are fragments of the *Sīrat al-Ḥākim,* the *Sīrat ʿAntara* and the *Sīrat al-Mujāhidīn* ("Epic of the Holy Warriors"). The majority of the preserved manuscripts originate from 16th–18th centuries. It was not before the late 19th century that some of the epics appeared in print. There is still no critical edition of any Arabian epic and, with a few exceptions,[7] no translation into any other language.

The epics are usually entitled *sīra* (pl. *siyar*) 'geste, vita, way of life, biography' such as the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* ("Epic of Alexander"), *Sīrat al-Mujāhidīn*, but some simply call themselves 'story' (*qiṣṣa*), while others use the older term *dīwān.* The modern Arabic term for 'Folk Epic', *sīra shaʿbiyya*, is a borrowing from the European terminus for 'popular romance' or 'popular epic'. It combines the generic term *sīra* with the adjective 'popular' (*shaʿbī*). The latter attribution, borrowed from modern western folklore scholarship, aims to indicate the circumstances of the composition, transmission and reception of the works in question and to distinguish the pseudohistorical epic 'biographies' from the canonized ones like the famous biography of the Prophet Muḥammad (*Sīrat al-Nabī* or al-*Sīra al-Nabawiyya*) by Ibn Isḥāq (d. 767 AD).[8]

While some epics are set in pre-Islamic times – for example the *Sīrat Fīrūz Shāh* in Achaemenid Persia, the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* in Alexander's era, the *Sīrat ʿAntara* in Pre-Islamic North Arabia and the *Sīrat Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan* in pre-Islamic South Arabia –, others are set after the introduction of Islam, especially during the Islamic conquests, the time of the Crusades (e.g. *Sīrat Baybars*) and the conflicts between Islamic warriors and their enemies (e.g. *Epic of the Holy Warriors*). Taken together, the Arabian epics cover almost all of recorded pre-Islamic and Islamic history from the remotest past until the Fatimid (*Sīrat al-Ḥākim*) and Mamluk era (*Sīrat Baybars*). Shared protagonists and cross ref-

see Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss,* Nr. 9222 ff. In our case, however, *dīwān* seems to be synonymous with *sīra.*

6 See Schreiner, "Samau'al", pp. 418 (text) and 127 (translation).

7 The recently published French translation of *Sīrat Baybars* by G. Bohas/ J.-P. Guillaume, *Le Roman de Baibars. Traduit de l'arabe et annoté.* Vol. 1–10. Paris 1985–1998, has now reached ten volumes by; in the early 19th century, Terrick Hamilton, Oriental Secretary to the British Embassy at Constantinople, published a translation of the first parts of the *Sīrat ʿAntara*, covering approximately one third of the text.

8 See Ott, *Metamorphosen*, pp. 6–8.

erences link the epics to one another and help to generate a coherent chain of epics.

Arabian epics are of pseudo-historical character. They claim to be what Hans Robert Jauss calls "epic truth",[9] i.e. they intend to be believed as true history. From the point of view of 'canonical' Arabic historiography, this led to a negative estimation of their value. Arabian epics were condemned as being full of lies, disguising the truth and telling "nonsense that only fools can believe".[10] Obviously, they were expected to tell such stories that could be judged by the criterion of their conformity with historical truth, and not, for example, by the criteria used for literary fiction, such as the stories told by Sheherazade in the *Arabian Nights.* Such categories are still valid even in modern times. When, in 1997, a member of the audience of the Moroccan storyteller Sī Milūd was asked, whether the *Arabian Nights* would ever have formed part of the storyteller's repertoire, the answer was a clear "No, …because there are too many devils and too much sorcery in it, […] while the ʿAntariyya and the Wahhābiyya [i.e. the *Sīrat ʿAntara* and the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*] are *taʾrīkh*, history".[11]

But of course, the epics do not relate history in a literal sense: they always tell a good story. Numerous exciting and entertaining episodes illustrate the vivid martial, social, amicable and erotic relations between the protagonists on all the sides involved, be it Muslims and Christians, Arabs and Byzantines, Franks and Persians or other parties. Dangerous encounters with enemies who have supernatural power occur, and even the world of magic has its place in mysterious treasure caves or wonderful journeys through lands like the "Land of Wonders", the "Wadi of the Gardens", the "Land of Thunder", the "Carbuncle Islands" and so on. Despite significant differences in style, content and historical origin among works of the genre, all epics share what Peter Heath called an "emphasis on heroes and heroic deeds of battle, their pseudo-historical tone and setting, and their indefatigable drive toward cyclic expansion: one event leads to another, one battle to another, one war to another, and so on for hundreds and thousands of pages".[12]

In his fundamental study, Heath listed the sources that contributed to the formation of the Arabian epics: Arabic poetry; pre-Islamic tribal narratives in short, anecdotal form; epic narratives called *Ayyām al-ʿArab* ("The Battle Days of the Arabs"); Arabic love stories; and the numerous popular and literary

9 See Jauss, *Epos und Roman*, p. 80.

10 Thus the judgment of Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), see Ott, *Metamorphosen*, p. 47.

11 Kruk/Ott, "In the Popular Manner", p. 189.

12 Heath, *The Thirsty Sword*, p. xvi.

records of the life and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad and the early Islamic conquests. In addition to these Arabic sources, the tradition of popular heroic narrative in Persian literature also had an important influence. Two Arabian epics, the *Sīrat Fīrūz Shah* and *Qiṣṣat Bahram*, are clearly Arabic versions of Persian epics. The Byzantine/Hellenistic Greek tradition, on the other hand, seems to have played a more minor role.[13] From the 13th century onwards, popular narrative genres like the pseudohistorical 'campaign' (*maghāzī*) and 'conquest' (*futūḥ*) works gained increasing popularity, as can be judged from the large number of extant manuscripts. Heath describes the difference between the *futūḥ* and *maghāzī* on the one hand and the Arabian epic on the other as follows: "All of these works deal with actual historical figures and (to a certain degree) events. They may be described as pseudo-historiographical works into which a measure of fiction – more or less, as the case may be – has intruded. The popular *sīra* genre represents the reverse side of the coin: they are basically works of fiction adorned with a pseudo-historical and pseudo-historiographical overlay".[14]

Arabian epics are prosimetrical texts.[15] Typically, we find in them three different stylistic forms: the narrative itself is composed in simple prose with post-classical elements; descriptive passages and certain narrative elements appear in highly formulaic rhymed prose (*saj*ʿ); and poems in classical Arabic rhyme and meter interrupt the narrative from time to time. In the poems, the protagonists express their emotions or the situation is contemplated. Besides quotations from classical Arabic poets, we find many occasional poems of poor quality, but also exceptionally beautiful ones. As early as 1828, the German Poet Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866) chose some particularly beautiful poems out of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors* and translated them into German.[16]

Arabian epics were composed and transmitted anonymously. Nevertheless, in the introductory part of some epics, a chain of 'storytellers' (*rāwī*) is mentioned who transmitted a particular epic. Some of them even hold good for the epic's authors (*mu'allif, muṣannif*) and thus claim in a way the role of 'super-authority'. This is the case with the *rāwī* Najd Ibn Hishām al-ʿAmirī, descendant of the Banū Kilāb tribe, who serves as a *rāwī* for the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*, the tribal epic of the Banū Kilāb. Other epics were ascribed to serious historians in order to enhance their plausibility as 'true history'. Thus, the well-respected Egyptian historian Ibn Khallikān (d. 1282) figures as *rāwī* of the *Sīrat*

13 Ibid., pp. 53–64.
14 Ibid., pp. 59–60.
15 For the Arabic tradition of Prosimetrum, see Heinrichs, "Prosimetrical Texts".
16 See Ott, "Welche Gärten uns umfangen".

al-Ḥākim, notwithstanding the numerous magical and supernatural elements in this epic. A third example is the philologist and poet al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 828), the alleged *rāwī* of *Sīrat ʿAntara*, in which epic poets and poetry play a particularly prominent role.[17] In each of these and other cases, the claim of authorship by these alleged *rāwīs* can obviously be dismissed.

Apart from his role as an author and transmitter of the epic, the *rāwī* has also the function of a 'virtual storyteller'. Using different types of textual insertions, he creates a complete oral storytelling performance within the written text and thus transforms the readers into a storyteller's audience.[18] These insertions include formulaic expressions, typical of oral compositions, such as "The *rāwī* said" (*qāla l-rāwī*), "Oh you gentlemen, oh you noble men" (*yā sāda yā kirām*), "Pray for the perfect full-moon" (*ṣallū ʿalā badr al-tamām*), "Let us now come back to the first story" (*wa-narjiʿ ilā l-ḥadīt al-awwal*), "It has become night, the story will go on tomorrow night" (*wa-l-layl amsā wa-tamām al-ḥadīṯ laylat ġadā*).

Arabian epics appear in oral as well as written media. There is one epic, the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl,* which in the early 21st century is still being performed in its orally generated form by epic singers accompanied by the one-stringed *rabab*, reciting the verses of the epic in the typical epic style, between improvisation and memorized formulae.[19] But the predominant style of oral performance of the Arabian epics was, and is, the public reading of the written text, of which 19th-century European travelers have left incidental accounts.[20] Until relatively recently, this kind of performance was a common part of daily life in Arabic speaking countries. In spite of this, only few such performances have been subjected to a detailed analysis.[21]

The following example describes a public reading of *Sīrat ʿAntara* recorded in 1997 in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh.[22] Sī Milūd Bin ʿAbdannabī Laʿsīs (d. 2000) was the last of his family to perform Arabian epics 'in the popular manner', sitting on a low *kursī* and speaking, without amplification, to a large audience of sometimes more than one hundred people (Figure 11.1).

The audience gathered in the park of Dār al-Barūd behind the Kutubiyya minaret. Most listeners were illiterate men of low social status like a shoeblack,

17 See Ott, *Metamorphosen*, pp. 42–45.

18 See Ott, "From Coffeehouse into the Manuscript", *passim.*

19 See Reynolds*, Heroic Poets*.

20 Cf. Heath, *The Thirsty Sword*, pp. 31–42; Herzog, *Geschichte und Imaginaire,* pp. 14–19.

21 Among them is the reading of a 'storyteller' (*ḥakawātī*) in a Damascus coffeehouse, recorded in 1994 by Thomas Herzog: Herzog, "Présentation".

22 For the following cf. Kruk/Ott, "In the popular manner".

FIGURE 11.1 *The Moroccan* sīra *reciter Sī Miloud and his audience in 1997.* PHOTO: C. OTT.

a babouche seller and an airport porter. *Sīra* reading took place every day between afternoon and sunset prayer. A 'canon' of six or seven lengthy *siyar* was read to them one after another; the longest *sīra* reading, of the *Sirat al-Mujāhidīn*, covered one year and three months. Although Sī Milūd always read from books, it was clear that he knew the texts almost by heart and would never skip parts, as other storytellers did.

Sī Milūds recitation followed a fixed prosodic pattern which divided the text into short declamatory units. The length of these declamatory lines varied from four to 37 syllables according to the necessity of a breathing space and the syntactic-semantic units of the text, i.e. the colons of the rhymed prose (*saj*ʿ). Most of the syllables were pronounced in the same pitch; in direct speech or in emphatic passages the pitch of the declamation was sharpened, and some particularly emphatic words were shouted. Immediately after the emphasized words or syllables, the declamation returned to the basic note, with the last syllable often flattened to the pitch of normal speech (Figure 11.2).[23]

In their written form, Arabian epics were transmitted by manuscripts.[24] Thousands of manuscript volumes of Arabian epics have been preserved. Interestingly, they are not the product of generative orality, that is a creative

23 See Ott, *Metamorphosen,* pp. 195–209.

24 For the following see Ott, *Metamorphosen*, pp. 51 sq.

FIGURE 11.2 *Two declamatory lines in the technique of Si Mīlūd.* TRANSCRIPTION AFTER RECORDINGS BY C. OTT IN 1997.

re-writing or re-telling of the story, but rather show all features of scriptural transmission like scribal errors, omissions of lines or words and interlinear glosses.[25] The transmission of the epics, thus, is much more literal than might be assumed. According to all that we know about the transmission techniques of Arabic literature in general, this should also be true for the time preceding the earliest preserved manuscripts, too, so the centuries between c. 1100 and 1400 AD.

Most of the manuscripts preserved until today are of heterogeneous appearance, have a long history of compilation, and were put together over many years, if not centuries after the copying of their oldest core. In such manuscripts, fragments of up to fifty different copies may be found. In contrast to this kind of manuscript, there are also some finer and homogeneous examples. The number of volumes in these copies is smaller, and they were apparently copied for the use of private libraries and their owners.[26]

The most common form of the manuscripts was slim booklets written for the use of storytellers who recited them in public performance (see above). Readers' notes by storytellers, booksellers and borrowers, but also private readers show us that their audience and public consisted of a broad spectrum of urban society. The specifications of the readers' professions range from doorman (*bawwāb*) to fruit seller (*fākihāni*) and from storyteller (*ḥakawātī*) to stationer (*warrāq*).[27]

These booklets were frequently lent out, and clever librarians, and sometimes the storytellers themselves, could make good money from them. This is illustrated by a long reader's remark at the end of one of the manuscripts of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*, commenting on the division of the manuscript into parts:

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25 See the detailed analyses in ibid., pp. 101–37.

26 Ibid., pp. 51–100 and the catalogue pp. 218–56.

27 Ibid., p. 90.

> Oh possessor of this book! May God not have mercy upon you! What shame you are among the storytellers [...] because you end your book on the most unlikely and meanest passage, and this only in order to trick your customers, so that you can take as much money from them as you would like! If it were not like that, this passage would not be fit to end the text here or to interrupt it![28]

2 Epics Related to Byzantium

Byzantium plays a major role in several Arabian epics. In the words of Malcolm Lyons, whose detailed summaries[29] form an excellent gateway to the epics for non-Arabic readers, "Byzantium enjoys favored enemy status".[30] But this is by no means the only way in which Byzantium figures in the epics. The Arabian epics also show a broad and vivid fascination for many aspects of Byzantine politics, life, and culture, such as the architecture of churches and palaces, the city of Constantinople, the way of life of monks and priests, of warriors and lovely maidens, Byzantine handcrafts, Greek scholarship and books of wisdom, matters of translation from Arabic to Greek and *vice versa*, and so on.

2.1 The *Epic of the Holy Warriors*

The most important of all Arabian epics in this respect is the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*,[31] a frontier epic which focuses on the Byzantine-Arab conflicts between the reigns of the Umayyad Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705) and the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Wāthiq (841–46). It is known as *Sīrat al-Mujāhidīn*, as well as under the titles *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma, Sīrat al-Amīra Ḏhāt al-Himma*, or *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma wa-l-Baṭṭāl*, thus mentioning the name of its main protagonists. These are the heroine and war-princess (*amīra*) Dhāt al-Himma and her

28 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS arabe 3883, fol. 79a, reader's complaint dated 1076/1666, cf. Ott, "From the Coffeehouse into the Manuscript", p. 451.

29 Lyons, *Epic,* vol. 2 (concise versions) and vol. 3 (extended versions) with various indices. The summaries cover the following printed epics: *ʿAlī al-Zaybaq, Sīrat ʿAntara, Sīrat Baybars, Sīrat Banī Hilāl, Sīrat al-Mujāhidīn* (*i.e. the Epic of the Holy Warriors*)*, Sīrat Fīruz Shāh, Sīrat Ḥamza, Sīrat Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan, Sīrat Sayf al-Tījān, Qiṣṣat az-Zīr Sālim.* Epics that are preserved in manuscript form only are not included.

30 Lyons, "The Land of War", p. 45.

31 For general information and secondary literature see Canard, "Dhū l-Himma"; Steinbach, *Dhat al-Himma*, and Ott, *Metamorphosen*. English summary of the contents in Lyons, *Epic,* vol. 2, pp. 151–211 (concise) and vol. 3, pp. 301–504 (extended). A detailed study of the warrior women in this epic can be found in Kruk, *Warrior Women*, pp. 37–109.

companion, the warrior al-Baṭṭāl, who under the name of Seyyid Battal Gazi also became a major popular hero in Turkish epic.[32] Other sources give the variants Dalhama or Delhemma for the heroine's proper name,[33] so that the title appears as *Sīrat Dalhama wa-l-Baṭṭāl* or simply *Delhemma*. In any case, the same epic is denoted, which, for the sake of convenience and consistency, from here on will only be called the *Epic of the Holy Warriors.*

The *Epic of the Holy Warriors* starts, as a tribal epic, with a rivalry between two Arabic tribes, namely the Banū Kilāb and the Banū Sulaym, on the Arabian Peninsula. The Banū Kilāb, a north Arabian tribe who were partly brought by the Umayyads to settle in Syria, have the advantage. From Syria, the chiefs of the two tribes together lead the Islamic troops into Byzantine territory.

Three stages lead from the Central Arabian Highlands, the Najd and Hijāz, to the Byzantine capital. Each is marked by a symbolic object that has to be obtained by the heroes. The first object is a precious horse named Muzna, a symbol of bedouin life. It is about this mare that the heroes and *amīr*s of the two clans and of others like the Banū Ṭayy quarrel in the first episodes of the epic.[34]

The second symbolic object consists of two hawks, found in the desert by the hero al-Ṣaḥṣāḥ and his companion on their search for a dowry for Ṣaḥṣāḥ's bride. Pearls and golden bells are tied to the hawks' feet. But Laylā's father does not accept the dowry. By chance, a little later Ṣaḥṣāḥ rescues the daughter of caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, who fell victim to a robbery when on her way back from the pilgrimage to Mecca. The caliph's son Maslama then tells him that the caliph had lost two hawks. The two hawks are given back to the caliph in Damascus, and thus the plot of the story leaves Najd.[35]

At that point the first expedition against Constantinople starts, a lengthy campaign under the leadership of both the caliph's son Maslama and the bedouin *amīr* Ṣaḥṣāḥ. The heroes encounter the army of the Byzantine emperor Leo III (in Arabic Lāwūn). After an unsuccessful siege from the sea and the loss of the Muslim fleet, the Muslims manage to conquer Constantinople by erecting a second town opposite the city. Leon is forced to surrender and to submit to humiliating terms, and Maslama has a huge mosque built within the city, its

32 See Dedes, *Battalname*.

33 See below note 47.

34 Episodes 1 to 4 in Lyons, *Epic*, vol. 2, pp. 151–52; vol. 3, pp. 301–306.

35 Episodes 5 to 7 in Lyons, *Epic*, vol. 2, pp. 152–53; vol. 3, pp. 307–10.

base only as large as a camel's skin.[36] Variations of the same trick appeared in literature since antiquity.

This first and shorter part of the epic goes back to a 'Syrio-Umayyad cycle', describing the adventures of the Umayyad *amīr* Maslama Ibn ʿAbdalmalik and the heroes of the Banū Kilāb. As Marius Canard has convincingly argued, the exploits of the historical *ghāzī* al-Baṭṭāl have here been put under the name of the Kilābī amīr al-Ṣaḥṣāḥ.[37]

After the successful end of the campaign, the death of al-Ṣaḥṣāḥ and the birth of the epic hero al-Baṭṭāl,[38] the third symbolic object appears, shifting the plot to Baghdād and to Mūsā al-Hādī, the new ʿAbbāsid caliph. The object of the caliph's desire is a precious candelabra bearing three hundred candles, which is in the possession of the Byzantine emperor, and hangs within the chapel in the innermost part of his palace. The heroes of the Banū Kilāb are now sent out to fetch the candelabra for the caliph. But the emperor, too, has his agents, who are also ordered to bring it back.[39]

Thus, the horse symbolizes the power of the bedouin warlord, the hawks the power of the Umayyad caliph and the candelabra the power of the Byzantine emperor. These three symbolic stages form a second layer to the core of the story, into which later numerous war episodes are fitted.[40]

The adventures of the Islamic 'Holy Warriors' at the northern frontier of the ʿAbbāsid empire fill the major part of the narrative. Their stronghold is Malaṭya (Melitene), a town founded by Leon's daughter Malaṭya and soon conquered by the Islamic troops who make it their home base.[41] The role played by the town of Malaṭya and its *amīr* ʿAmr Ibn ʿUbaydallāh of the Banū Sulaym is the reason why this second and much longer part has been called the 'Melitenian cycle'.[42] It had originally been the tribal epic of the Banū Sulaym, and therefore al-Baṭṭāl and the other Sulaymian heroes will play major roles in it.

A vast number of enthralling episodes follows, covering almost 90 percent of the text. These include feats of the heroes against men and animals, vivid descriptions of erotic and sexual relations between Arab men and Byzantine women, many conversions of Christians (especially women) to Islam and a few

36 Episodes 8 to 12 in Lyons, *Epic*, vol. 2, pp. 153–55; vol. 3, pp. 310–15.

37 See Canard, "Dhū l-Himma", p. 237.

38 The "twofold" al-Baṭṭāl (the historical *ghāzī* vs. the epic hero) is extensively discussed in Dedes, *Battalname*, pp. 3–8.

39 Episodes 27 to 29 in Lyons, *Epic*, vol. 2, pp. 159–60; vol. 3, pp. 328–30.

40 See Ott, "Byzantine Wild East", pp. 139–41.

41 Episode 20 in Lyons, *Epic*, vol. 2, p. 157; vol. 3, pp. 322–23.

42 See Canard, "Dhū l-Himma", p. 237.

from Islam to Christianity. Some of the most interesting episodes have been listed by P.A. Agapitos as parallels to Byzantine romances.[43] Beyond that, the many contacts between Byzantine and Arab warrior women are worth mentioning here, during which a "curious mixture of admiration, sympathy and rivalry" is shown.[44]

It is the figure of an Arabic warrior woman that forms the biographical core of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors* and ties the two parts together. Shortly after the conquest of Constantinople, the girl Fāṭima is born to the Banū Kilāb tribe. Already as a young girl, Fāṭima shows her heroic talents and refuses marriage with the words:

> Father, I do not need a lord or master. I am created only for wrangling, not for men and the marriage bed. Only my sword, my coat of mail and my battle gear will lie with me. The only thing that I will treat with loving care is my horse's foal, and the only eye black I will aim for is the powder of windblown dust.[45]

Fāṭima will soon get the honorific name Dalhama ("she-wolf") or, in later versions, Dhāt al-Himma ("woman of high resolve").[46] As a warrior princess (*amīra*), she carries countless courageous, treacherous and victorious deeds for the Banū Kilāb (against the Banū Sulaym and other tribes), for the Arabs (against the Byzantines and other hostile nations) and for Islam in general (against Christianity and other non-Islamic religions). We can in fact read the entire epic as a heroic *Vita* that includes the past history of her ancestors and the adventures of her son and grandson, all of them survived by Dhāt al-Himma.

The epic ends, after no less than 12,000 pages, with the death of the leading protagonists Dhāt al-Himma, her black-skinned son ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and of the Sulaymian hero al-Baṭṭāl. After the death of Caliph al-Wāthiq, the whole country "from Ankara to Malaṭya" is recaptured by the Byzantines.[47]

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43 See Agapitos, "In Rhomaian", p. 270.

44 Kruk, *Warrior Women*, p. 57.

45 Kruk, *Warrior Women*, p. 48

46 "Dalhamah" and "Dhū l-Himma" are the earliest and most common forms of the heroine's honorific name in the manuscripts of the *Sīrat al-Mujāhidīn*. The form "Dhāt al-Himma" appears only in 19th century manuscripts and printed editions. Besides these, many variant forms of the name occur. On the history and development of the name, see Ott, *Metamorphosen,* pp. 39–42.

47 Episodes 170–71 in Lyons, *Epic,* vol. 2, p. 211; vol. 3, pp. 502–04.

The date and circumstances of the composition of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors* are still unknown and can probably never be entirely reconstructed. The earliest hypothesis, suggested by H. Grégoire and R. Goossens in 1934, says that the basis of the epic must have been known in Northern Syria around the year 1000.[48] But this can only be true for its first part, i.e. the 'Syrio-Umayyad Cycle', since the second part (the 'Melitenian cycle') contains many references to the later Crusades and the Fāṭimid and Seljuk periods (11th–12th centuries). On this question, M. Canard has given the most elaborate analysis. In his detailed article in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, he states that "if the first outlines of the Syrio-Umayyad cycle were traced as early as the Umayyad Period, and those of the Melitenian cycle shortly after the death of *amīr* ʿAmr in 249/863, it was at a much later date, and under the inspiration of the spirit of hostility to the Crusaders, that an epic of the Arab-Byzantine wars followed by the Islamo-Frankish wars finally took shape".[49] A third hypothesis was proposed in my own 2003 study, namely, that the entire epic could have emerged in post-Mirdāsid Northern Syria in the 12th century, more precisely between 1100 and 1143.[50] The Mirdāsids were an Arabic local dynasty of Kilābian origin, who ruled from their capital Aleppo between 1024 and 1080. The decline of the power of the Mirdāsids did not reduce the success of an epic that helped to strengthen tribal, and political pride and feelings of identity. An attribution to the Mirdāsids would explain why a tribal epic of the Banū Kilāb could attract them.

2.2 *Sīrat al-Ḥākim*

Byzantium and Arab-Byzantine relations also form the major subjects of other Arabian epics. Most important is the epic of al-Ḥākim (*Sīrat al-Ḥākim*), which has remained practically unknown to western and even Arab research, since it has never been printed. Its manuscript copies, the earliest of which are dated to 1430, cover about 900 folia, that is 1800 pages, and are divided into five, ten or 20 parts. Being so extensive, *Sīrat al-Ḥākim* may be counted among the major Arabic epics. In the course of the 19th century, several manuscript copies of this epic were brought to European libraries, namely Paris, London, Tübingen, Vienna, Gotha, and Berlin (Figure 11.3).[51]

48 See Grégoire/Goossens, "Byzantinisches Epos" and Canard, "Dhū l-Himma", p. 238.

49 Canard, "Dhu l-Himma", p. 238.

50 See Ott, *Metamorphosen*, p. 50.

51 The Berlin manuscript has been described and studied by Ott, "Finally", and Lenora, *Der gefälschte Kalif*.

FIGURE 11.3 *The 20 volumes of* Sīrat al-Ḥākim. *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-PK, Orient-abteilung: Codex Wetzstein II 486-505* (*dated 1104/1693*). PHOTO: C. OTT.

The contents of *Sīrat al-Ḥākim* cover the history of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh (985–1021) beginning with his ancestors, a dynasty of former kings of Qayrawān. It then relates al-Ḥākim's long path to caliphal power, his adventures as caliph, his mysterious disappearance, and the foundation of the city of Cairo by a girl, later "queen" named al-Qāhira, daughter of Fatima and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the later caliph al-Malik al-Muʿizz. The history of the sons and successors of al-Hakim is also described, mainly his son al-Ẓāhir, up to the death of all protagonists. While the first half of the epic is set in North Africa, India and Yemen, the second half is almost entirely connected with "Franks and Byzantines", figures with mixed points of reference to both the Crusaders and the Byzantines. In large parts of the epic, female protagonists are the main actors. In particular, the wives, mothers and daughters of all male protagonists play major roles in the epic. One might even call *Sīrat al-Ḥākim* the "female face of Egypt's fantastic history".[52]

References to Byzantium start right at the beginning of *Sīrat al-Ḥākim*, when al-Abṭan, prince of Qayrawān, and his Mamluks are taken captive by the "Franks of Constantinople" and brought by ship to the Byzantine capital. The emperor of Constantinople asks al-Abṭan to become his son's teacher, and after seven years of successful lessons in all kinds of sciences, first and foremost the "reading of the *Injīl* (i.e. the Gospel)", the emperor sends him home to Qayrawān. A little later, al-Abṭan meets the emperor's son again in Qayrawān. He had been robbed by a gang of criminals and sold as a slave to al-Abṭan's father. When al-Abṭan recognizes his former disciple among the slaves, he decides to free him and bring him back to Constantinople. The Byzantine emperor gratefully welcomes his son's savior:

> The Emperor was delighted about the great kindness, which the teacher had granted his son. Joyfully he said to al-Abṭan, "Oh honored Muslim, if all men were like you, there would only be honest people in the world. I have nothing with which I could repay you, except for one single thing."
>
> "And what kind of thing is that, Oh Emperor?" asked al-Abṭan.
>
> "Muslim, you must know," responded the Emperor, "that once, in olden times, a wise and mighty Sultan ruled over this city with his soldiers. They buried many treasures, for they understood the skill of alchemy, and God the Exalted, may He be praised, gave them ore, from which they could make gold. In the same way they could make pearls and jewels from pebbles. They buried the treasures underground around here, put sentinels

52 See Ott, "Finally", p. 64.

> in place to guard the treasure caves, and marked the places where they lay. [...] They recorded in parchment books the entire knowledge that God the Exalted, may He be praised, gave them, and brought all the books into this mighty church, more precisely, into this very fountain here. At the bottom of the fountain there is a gigantic cavern filled with treasure. And you, Muslim, are the most worthy man of our time, to be lowered into this underground treasure chamber."[53]

The books of alchemy, wisdom and magic, which al-Abtan then obtains, will play a very important role throughout the epic. Al-Ḥākims eagerness to possess the treasures that are described there, and even more than these, all the treasures of the world, is one of the major themes of the *Sīrat al-Ḥākim.* The treasures that it describes in detail also demonstrate interesting reminders of Pharaonic and other Egyptian motifs, and throw light on the role that Egyptian antiquities play in the imagination of the epic.[54]

But let us come back to the epic's references to Byzantium. With the help of a pair of trained giant, one-eyed monsters called *ʿurund*, al-Qāhira and her troops conquer Constantinople and capture its ruler Sabīl Ibn Mikhāʾīl:

> The people marched out of the church to the gateway of the palace, in which Sabīl had taken up his position. There they immediately saw Barjuwān with the 'Urund and the 'Urunda storming ahead like billowing surf. [...] Abu Ḥīla cried out, "There is no God but God, Muhammed is the Prophet of God. Praised be the creator of all things!" The noble Qāhira shouted, "O Emir, Sword of the faith, may our lord command the 'Urund to break open this palace for us." Then Barjuwān sent the 'Urund against the palace gate, and he destroyed it and tore the wall, the 'Urunda followed him. And Emperor Sabīl shouted, "Help me! Help me, you servants of the Compassionate God!"[55]

After the emperor of Sicily, ʿAbd al-Ṣalīb, is also converted to Islam, the heroes proceed to conquer Venice, Genoa and the "Isle of Minerals" (*jazīrat al-maʿādin*). After many adventures, towards the end of the epic the Islamic heroes return to the treasure cave under the "great church" (*al-kanīsa al-ʿūẓmā*) of Constantinople, which again is described in the utmost technical detail:

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53 *Sīrat al-Ḥākim*, MS. Berlin SBBPK, We. II 486, fol. 6a, 4–6b,12.

54 See Lenora, *Der gefälschte Kalif,* p. 185–97.

55 MS. Berlin WE. II 505, fol. 10a, 8–18.

> Emperor Constantine had gathered the treasure and had also erected the 'Great Church' above it. It had 360 entrances, in conformity with the number of days in the year. Once a year, on one appointed day, all the gateways were opened and then closed again, after which only one of them remained open, namely the one that faced the imperial palace. He had also built 360 gateways into the treasure cave, each one of which differed from every other. Behind the first door he dug a stairway into the earth, 160 steps deep. Some of the steps were firm, others gave way when they were stepped on. He made the firm ones of white marble, the deadly ones of black (…).[56]

They step down into the cave, retrieve all the treasures, and go home to Cairo.[57] The *Sīrat al-Ḥākim* is an excellent example of the fascination Arabs felt for the way of life, material culture and art of the Byzantines.

2.3 *Sīrat ʿAntara*

The focus on Byzantium as a "favored enemy" is true even for some epics that are set in pre-Islamic times, such as the *Sīrat ʿAntara*. There, Byzantium is presented as the rival of Persia, each with their own client kings, who normally find it convenient to live in peace with one another:

> You know that the emperor of Greece [...] has always been accustomed to send to Chosroe a vast quantity of goods, and precious stones, and metals and jewels, and male and female European slaves, and other objects, in short, that the tongue fails in describing [...] One day Badhramūt came to the Emperor, and found him sitting down, and all his treasures before him: he was selecting the best metals and jewels, and was putting them in cups, and was sealing them up, and was packing them up in boxes, and was preparing them for a long journey by land. Badhramūt was much agitated and surprised at this. "To whom do you intend sending this treasure?" he asked. "To Chosroe Nushirvan, the lord of the crown and palace", replied the Emperor, "for he is the King of Persia and Daylam, and the ruler of nations". "O monarch, this King, is he not of the religion of Jesus, the son of Mary?" the chief asked. "He is the great King", he replied, "and he worships fire; and he has armies and allies whose numbers are incal-

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56 MS. Vienna Nr. 782, fol. 323b, 15–324a, 1.

57 See Lenora, *Der gefälschte Kalif,* pp. 133–34.

> culable, and on this account I send him tribute, and keep him away from my own country".[58]

"Equilibrium in the region is upset by Franks, more formidable fighters than the Byzantines, who wish not merely to conquer but also to colonize, and in this context Arabs are natural supporters of whoever opposes them",[59] Lyons continues. This is to explain why the pre-Islamic warrior ʿAntara, the hero of the *Sīrat ʿAntara*, when fighting on the side of the Persians against the Byzantines, kills the Frank al-Khalījān, who has sworn to "take over the kingship of all the Messiah's lands".[60] This is a clear and anachronistic allusion to the Crusades and the "disturbing influence that the Crusaders exerted on the balance between Islam and Byzantium".[61]

The same epic, *Sīrat ʿAntara,* also has a number of passages referring to Byzantium in another, less hostile, way. Toward the end of the epic, there is one scene in which the Byzantines try to honor their guest ʿAntar with a statue, a gesture, which he appreciates but also thinks incompatible with religion.[62] Thus, even before the emergence of Islam, religion is an important issue.

2.4 Other Epics

In the *Sīrat Ḥamza al-Pahlawān*, the pre-Islamic hero Ḥamza is welcomed at Constantinople by the wise king Stephanos and then visits Greece and the country of Caesar, "king of the Rūmān", which, according to Lyons, is more likely to be Anatolian Caesarea than Rome.[63] Here, too, allusions to Byzantium seem to fit more appropriately into "a distorted memory of the Crusades".[64]

In the famous *Sīrat Baybars,* which takes place principally in Cairo, and deals with the campaigns and battles of the Mamluk Sultan Baybars (reigned 1259–77) against the Mongols on the one hand and the Crusaders on the other, Byzantium and the Byzantines play only a minor role. The Byzantine emperor Michael is kidnapped and handed over to Baybars in a wooden box, after Baybars had attacked the Byzantines and Michael had shut himself in his city and closed the straits with an iron chain.[65]

58 Hamilton, *ʿAntar*, vol. 1, pp. 254, 259.

59 Lyons, "The Land of War", p. 43.

60 Ibid., p. 42.

61 Ibid., p. 43.

62 Lyons, *Epic*, vol. 2, pp. 41–42; vol. 3, pp. 70 (episode No. 80).

63 Ibid., p. 44.

64 Ibid., p. 44.

65 Lyons, *Epic*, vol. 3, p. 108; Herzog, *Geschichte*, p. 872.

The same is the case in the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl,* where an attack on Mecca by an unknown "king of Rūm"[66] is the only mention of Byzantium; the *sīra* itself is predominantly set in the motherland of the Arabic tribes on the Arabian Peninsula (*Najd*). In the continuation of the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl,* the *Taghrībat Banī Hilāl,* the heroes emigrate from there in a western direction to Tunis, passing by Iraq, Syria – where once again the Crusaders are holding the cities of Ramla and Jerusalem – and Egypt.

Several other *siyar* do not allude to Byzantium at all.

3 Cross-Border Warriors, or: an Arabic *Digenis*?

There can be no doubt that the most extensive and most original representation of the 'Islamic Wild West' (the Arabic side of the literary borderland between Byzantium and the Arabs) is the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*. On the Byzantine side, the *Digenis Akritis*[67] is its closest counterpart, describing what could be called the 'Byzantine Wild East'.

How closely the two epic traditions came together in this literary borderland can be seen from Digenis' ancestry. Two different genealogies are given according to the Grottaferata (G) and the Escorial (E) versions of the *Digenis Akritis* respectively. Interestingly enough, they seem to be inspired by the two main sources of the Arabian *Epic of the Holy Warriors*. In E, the emir is a descendant, on his father's side, of "Mouselom",[68] who can most probably be identified with Maslama, the protagonist of the 'Syrio-Umayyad Cycle' of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*.[69] In G, his maternal grandfather is "Ambron",[70] who doubtlessly is identical with ʿAmr Ibn ʿUbaydallāh, the *amīr* of Malaṭya and protagonist of the 'Melitene Cycle' in the same epic.[71] By using their names, the emir relates himself to the great heroes of the Arabian epic and creates for himself a kind of 'Wild-West-genealogy'.[72]

In this genealogy, rapine activity plays an essential role. It is mentioned in the *Digenis* as well as in the Arabian Epic. In the Escorial version of the *Digenis,* the emir says to his wife: "Do you not remember what I suffered because of you

66 Lyons, *Epic,* vol. 2, p. 120.

67 On *Digenis* see also the chapter by C. Jouanno in this volume.

68 Jeffreys, *Digenis*, p. xxxv.

69 Jeffreys, *Digenis*, p. xxxvii.

70 Jeffreys, *Digenis*, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

71 Canard, "Les principaux personnages", p. 170.

72 See Ott, "Byzantine Wild East", p. 144.

at the beginning? [...] I took you as a slave in the beginning, but I looked on you as my lady".[73]

A quite similar story is that of al-Ḥārith and Rabāb, ancestors of the heroes of the Banū Kilāb in the first generation. It runs as follows: one day, al-Ḥārith, the *amīr* of the Banū Kilāb, goes on a razzia (Arab. *ghazwa*). Having been successful, he sees the beautiful Rabāb amongst his booty and raptures her from her parents. Her father is deeply hurt and cries: "Why did you take her by violence? It would have been better for you to take her by law and marry her".[74]

Al-Ḥārith then collects a dowry, pays it to her father and thus marries her. This love-story is the very first episode of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*. It opens the whole epic and as such is quite well known. It could be easily imagined that the allusion in the *Digenis* is to this story.

Just as the young Digenis passes through a series of stages on the way to becoming the supreme hero, the same is true for the young Fāṭima/Dhāt al-Himma, the main heroine of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*. Already as a young girl, she kills a lion, cuts branches and reeds to make them into weapons and teaches herself the art of fighting on horseback.[75]

Many more cross-references can be traced in the two works, and dedicated research will surely bring to light most of these. But we should not forget that there is a third work of Arabic literature that is closely connected to both the *Epic of the Holy Warriors* and the *Digenis*: the *Sīrat ʿUmar.*

3.1 From Epic to Romance: *Sīrat ʿUmar* and the Impact of the *Arabian Nights*

Sīrat ʿUmar is the title of an extensive *Arabian Nights* tale; more precisely the first and more concise part of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors* (the 'Syrio-Umayyad Cycle') after having undergone a literary metamorphosis, at the end of which it became part of the *Arabian Nights* or *Thousand and One Nights.*

Three steps led to the adaptation of the epic into the *Arabian Nights*, two of which are quite technical: the insertion of the 'nights formula' (often with the function of a cliffhanger),[76] and the incorporation of independent story-

73 *Digenis E* 355. 359, ed. Jeffreys, p. 264.

74 *Sīrat al-Mujāhidīn*, ed. Beirut, p. 7.

75 Kruk, *Warrior Women*, pp. 41–45.

76 The various Arabic texts use different nights formulas, e.g. "Morning now dawned and Shahrazad broke off from what she had been allowed to say" (Lyons, according to the ZER redaction), and "But morning overtook Shahrazad, and she lapsed into silence" (Haddawy *Arabian Nights*, according to the Mahdi edition).

in-the-stories.[77] But the most important change affects the general style and attitude of the epic. The epic was transformed into a more refined, more fabulous, and more romantic text, in other words a shift from epic to romance. While the *Epic of the Holy Warriors* intends to relate to real history with its many references to the 7th- 9th centuries and a well-defined geographical setting, the *Sīrat ʿUmar* relates to matters of love, family saga and fairy tale, almost entirely free from historical and geographical reference. This is evident from the text's opening episodes. "Once upon a time…" Sophia, a daughter of the Byzantine emperor, came to the court of an imaginary king ʿUmar al-Nuʿmān of Baghdad as a gift from Ḥardūb, a local king of Caesarea, who had captured her on the seashore. As King ʿUmar's slave, she bears a boy and a girl. The "two-born" heroes are the protagonists of the *Sīrat ʿUmar*, a motif that comes quite close to the *Digenis Akritis*.

In the course of the story, whereas the relationship between the two Arabic texts becomes closer, and verbatim quotations of whole episodes and passages are predominant, almost all the historical proper names were changed into a-historical fantasy names. For example, the historical Maslama, son of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik and hero of the 'Syrio-Umayyad Cycle' of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*, appears as Ḍaw' al-Makān ("Light of the Place") in the *Sīrat ʿUmar.* His comrade Ṣaḥṣāḥ gets the fantastical name Kāna mā kān ("There was – there was not"). The Byzantine emperor Leo III, in the *Epic of the Holy Warrors* called Lāwūn, gets the name Lāwī in the Tübingen Manuscript of the *Sīrat ʿUmar*, but in the Calcutta edition, which resembles the more widespread Egyptian Recension of the Arabian Nights (ZER), his name is Afrīdūn, a modification of the Persian name Ferīdūn. Persian names fit the frame story of Shahrazād, which is set in pre-Islamic Iran. They are also substituted for the military leader ʿAṭṭāf in the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*, who becomes first Rustam and later Sāsān, both Persian names.

77 In the *Arabian Nights*, we frequently find stories inserted into other stories. Openings like the following are not exceptional: "I heard, O happy King, that the tailor told the King of China, that the barber told the guests that he said to the caliph: My brother said to the lady…". In this case, the tale of the second brother is inserted into the story of the barber which is an insertion into of the story of the tailor within the framework of the story of the hunchback and the King of China, see Haddawy, *Arabian Nights*, p. 272. The *Sīrat ʿUmar* has four lengthy tales inserted, two of them containing more stories-within-stories. The tales are inserted at places in the narrative, where the protagonists tell one another stories. The story of Tāj al-Muluk and the Princess Dunya, for example, is inserted when the Muslim army attacks Constantinople and the vizier Dandan seeks to console the grieving king Daw' al-Makān. The most famous of the inserted stories are the erotic tale of the Hashish-Eater and the story of Abu Hassan the wag: see Lyons, *Arabian Nights*, vol. I, pp. 304–594.

The following instance of this name substitution seems to be particularly relevant here.

> The two Arabic tribes whose rivalry opens the Epic of the Holy Warriors, namely the Banū Kilāb and the Banū Sulaym, become "Turks and Daylamites" in the *Sīrat ʿUmar*. Two examples for this may also illustrate how similar the wording of the two versions still is: In the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*, a dead Byzantine *patrikios* is described with the words: "*This baṭrīq* was a true giant; **a man of the Banū Kilāb** had killed him."[78]
>
> The corresponding passage of the *Sīrat ʿUmar* has: "This *baṭrīq* was a giant of the giants; **a man of the Turks** had killed him."[79]
>
> At another place in the *Epic of the Holy Warriors,* the *amīr* selects soldiers for a raid: "Then he chose one hundred horsemen amongst the **heroes of the Banū Kilāb and the Banū Sulaym**".[80]
>
> The text of *Sīrat ʿUmar* is as follows: "Then he **let the Turks and Daylamites** come before him and chose amongst the **heroes** one hundreds horsemen."[81]

Interestingly enough, "Turks and Dilamites" are mentioned in the Grottaferrata version of the *Digenis* too, as part of the Islamic troops.[82]

How, then, can we explain all these allusions? Surely not by simply supposing that the author of the *Digenis Akritis* had read or heard either the *Epic of the Holy Warriors* or the *Sīrat ʿUmar*. The composition of *Sīrat ʿUmar* was, in any case, too late and too far away from the formative period and region of the *Digenis*. But at the time of the composition of the *Digenis,* Northern Syria was a platform for cultural, political and economic relations with Byzantium. It may well be the case that Byzantines came into contact with the emerging *Epic of the Holy Warriors* here, even if not in its final form.

Where, when and under which circumstances the metamorphosis from epic to romance took place is still, and most probably will remain, speculative. The oldest testimony of the *Sīrat ʿUmar* is a manuscript preserved in the University Library of Tübingen. The manuscript has no colophon, but can most probably be dated in the 17th century. It is a 'second book' of the *Thousand and One Nights*, containing Nights 281 to 542 and covering exactly the complete story of ʿUmar an-Nuʿmān.

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78 *Sīrat al-Mujāhidīn*, ed. Cairo 1909, vol. 4, p. 63.

79 *Sīrat ʿUmar*, MS Tü, fol. 356b, l. 5–6.

80 *Sīrat al-Mujāhidīn*, ed. Cairo 1909, vol. 4, p. 59.

81 *Sīrat ʿUmar,* MS Tü, fol. 354b, l. 2–4.

82 *Digenis Akritis G* I 45, ed. Jeffreys, p. 4.

The 'Tübingen 'Umar' is the only illuminated *Arabian Nights* manuscript in existence, apart from a copy of it which is preserved in the John Rylands Library in Manchester. The miniatures of the Tübingen Umar show scenes from the *Sīrat 'Umar* using simplified schematic imagery. Knights on horseback, hunting and adventure scenes, as well as meetings and conversations between the characters involved, are illustrated. While the open air scenes are provided with no background, the scenes indoors are always framed by architectural elements. Their formatting is usually slightly broader than that of width of the text (Figure 11.4).

As Muhsin Mahdi has correctly assumed, the 'Tübingen Umar' is a formal attempt to continue the tradition of the *Arabian Nights* broken off in Night 282.[83] It was in fact quite a successful attempt. The so-called 'Egyptian recension' incorporated the *Sīrat 'Umar* into the canonical *Arabian Nights* text, and so, all the printed versions we know include that story.

Panagiotis Agapitos states that the *Sīrat 'Umar* "does not include the type of authentication device we observe in the *Digenis*, possibly because the tale's presence in the *Thousand and One Nights* excluded any notion of it being 'true history'".[84] Despite this observation, the spirit of the *Digenis* seems to be somewhat similar to that of the *Sīrat 'Umar*. Both share an ahistoric and romantic spirit, at least in comparison with the Arabian epic, by which both texts are inspired. And we can go a bit further; is there not, between the lines of *Sīrat 'Umar* as well as the *Digenis Akritis*, a kind of humor, even irony, towards the severeness, the religious enthusiasm, and the endless slaughters of the *Epic of the Holy Warriors*? Could this possibly be the reason why Digenis, although an Akritis, totally refrains from the bloody, brutal and humorless way of life of

83 The famous 15th century "Galland Manuscript", which was brought to Paris from Aleppo in 1701, breaks off in Night 282. Muḥsin Mahdī believes that the Tübingen Umar belongs to what he describes as *al-muḥāwalāt al-ūlā li-stitmāmi l-kitāb fī l-farʿ al-miṣrī*: "The first attempts to complete the book in the Egyptian branch": Mahdi, *Kitāb Alf layla wa-layla*, vol. 2, pp. 294–303. The "Egyptian branch" is a group of manuscripts copied in Egypt from the 16th century onwards, that is to say: in the late Mamluk and Early Ottoman eras. In these periods, Egypt and Syria had such close political and economic relations that it is hard to define whether an object found in one of the big cities of Syria or Egypt really originated there, or was brought there by traders or travelers. The Tübingen Umar may in fact have been written down in Egypt. Its foliation and the general style of the illuminations show a certain resemblance with a family of manuscripts from Cairo. But then the manuscript must have been brought to Aleppo. There it was incorporated into the library of the famous librarian Aḥmad al-Rabbāt al-Shaqifātī al-Ḥalabī: see Ott, "Wo versteckt sich".

84 Agapitos, "In Rhomaian", p. 272.

FIGURE 11.4 *Codex TÜ M.A. VI 32 (17th century), University Library of Tübingen:* Sīrat ʿUmar, *fol. 159b: an illustrated page of the "Tübingen ʿUmar".* PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, TÜBINGEN.

the Islamic Holy Warriors, and only confronts robbers and wild animals? Furthermore, could this humor possibly give us at least a small glimpse of hope in today's times of war in Syria and across its borders? Exactly the same region, many centuries ago, where the cross-border warriors of the Arabian epics emerged.

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PART 3

Wise Men and Clever Beasts

CHAPTER 12

The Literary Life of a Fictional Life: Aesop in Antiquity and Byzantium

Grammatiki A. Karla

Aesop, both a fictional and historical figure, is held to be the inventor of well-known tales of animals. He is said to have lived in the 7th c. BC, and there exists a number of literary testimonies from antiquity that refer to him (Herodotus, Aristophanes, etc.).[1] These agree on three main points: Aesop is linked to tales about animals; he had been a slave; and he met a tragic end at Delphi. These points become the narrative threads in a lengthy imaginary biography known as the *Life of Aesop* (henceforward *Life*).

The author of the *Life* is anonymous and there is no consensus over the date and place of composition of the work. The dating of a papyrus fragment from Berlin (P. Berol. 11628) to the 2nd or 3rd century AD stands as *terminus ante quem* for the *Life*, and scholars seem to agree on the dating of the archetype to the period of the 1st century BC – 2nd century AD.[2] The question of where the work was composed is, however, still open. Perry's suggestion that it was written in Egypt is not convincing, because the arguments he employs – the role of Isis as leader of the Muses (Μουσαναγωγός), the hostility towards Apollo and the mentioning of Nectanebo –[3] do not definitively prove that the *Life* originated there. More appealing is the view that the anonymous author of the *Life* is likely to have been a bilingual scholar from somewhere in the East, who was familiar with both Greek and Eastern literature.[4]

1 The "Testimonia de Aesopo Fabulisque Aesopiis" are be found in Perry, *Aesopica*, pp. 211–41.

2 On the different suggestions regarding the date of the archetype, see Karla, *Vita Aesopi*, pp. 8–9; Konstantakos, *Ακίχαρος* III, pp. 62–64.

3 Perry, *Studies*, pp. 24–26; Perry, *Aesopica*, p. 5.

4 Konstantakos, *Ακίχαρος* III, pp. 347–51, 554.

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The language is popular *koine* with many elements from the vernacular and from oral language.[5] The vocabulary also includes rare words and phrases, some of which are not found in other literary texts.[6]

Textual Tradition

The textual tradition of the *Life* is particularly rich. There are five papyrus fragments ranging from the 2nd/3rd century AD to the 6th/7th century.[7] Furthermore, the manuscript tradition of the text is divided into the following three versions:

1. Version G or Perriana (named after its first editor, Ben Edwin Perry),[8] is transmitted in a single manuscript, codex 397 of Pierpont Morgan Library New York (G) from the early 11th century.[9] This is the most ancient manuscript of the *Life*, and in all likelihood the text transmitted therein is the one closest to the archetype.[10]
2. Version W or Westermanniana (named after its first editor, Anton Westermann)[11] consists of two recensions, MORN and BPThSA.[12] The text transmitted in this version is briefer than that in the Perriana (G), but in some cases it has material from the archetype that does not exist in G,

5 For the language of *Life* see Papademetriou, Αἰσώπεια, pp. 15–18; Karla, "Fictional Biography"; see also the specialized studies by Hostetter, *A Linguistic Study*, and Stamoulakis, Το λεξιλόγιο της Μυθιστορίας.

6 Ruiz Montero, "Niveles de lengua", p. 607, singles out no less than 45 *hapax legomena*. For rare and late words and new or late meanings and uses, see Hostetter, *A Linguistic Study*, pp. 108–14.

7 Perry, *Studies*, pp. 39–70; Haslam, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 48, pp. 53–56; id., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 53, pp. 149–72; Ferrari, "POxy 3331 e Vita Aesopi 18", p. 296.

8 Perry, *Aesopica*, pp. 35–77.

9 According to Husselman, "A Lost Manuscript", p. 104, and Perry, "Text Tradition", p. 198, the ms. dates back to the 10/11th century. This manuscript also preserves a fragment of an earlier translation in Greek of the work *Kalila and Dimna* (fol. 1–7). On this issue see the chapter by B. Krönung in the present volume pp. 427–62.

10 Karla, "Die älteste Version".

11 Westermann, *Vita Aesopi*.

12 Both recensions are named after the initials of the mss.: M (Monacensis gr. 525; 14th century); O (Baroccianus 194, 15th century); R (Vaticanus gr. 1192, 14th century); N (Parisinus gr. 2894, 13th century); B (Londinensis Add. gr. 17015, 15th century); P (Vaticanus Palatinus gr. 269); Th (Thessalonicensis Bibliothecae Universitatis 86, 11th century); S (Mosquensis G.I.M. 436, 13th century); A (Atheniensis, Benaki Museum 53 (TA 72), 13th /14th century).

and it survives in many more manuscripts, which implies that it had a wider transmission. It was probably from this version (W), and more specifically from *recensio* MORN, that the Latin translation of the *Life*, the so-called Lolliniana, originated. This is named after the Lolliniana library of Belluno/Italy, where the 14th century codex 26, transmitting chapters 1–88a, is held. Another Latin translation of the *Life* and Fables of Aesop was produced by Rinuccio da Castiglione of Arezzo in 1448, who apparently used a Greek manuscript belonging to the *recensio* BPThSA (perhaps an immediate ancestor of the manuscript P).[13]

3. The Byzantine version of the *Life*, the Accursiana (named after the first editor, Bonus Accursius, 1479/80) or Planoudean version, probably also derives from the Westermanniana, and, more precisely, from a manuscript of the recensio BPThSA.[14] This reduction is a transposition of the *Life* in a more erudite linguistic register by the monk Maximos Planoudes (14th century). It is transmitted in at least 30 manuscripts, although there is only one edition, produced by Eberhardt in 1872.
4. There are also four *metaphrases* (translations), in a low register, dating to the early Modern Greek period (16th -17th century).[15]

Plot

The *Life* begins by defining Aesop's 'professional profile' (βιωφελέστατος "great benefactor", λογοποιός "story teller"),[16] his social status (δοῦλος "slave"), his origin (Φρὺξ ἐξ Ἀμορίου τῆς Φρυγίας "in Amorium of Phrygia"), as well as his appearance, through a catalogue of his ugly physical characteristics. Special mention is also made of his difficulty in enunciating correctly. After this introduction (ch. 1) and an episode that takes place in the house of Aesop's master (chs. 2–3), the narrative then centers on a miraculous event (the intervention of the Goddess Isis), during which Aesop acquires "excellent speech" (τὸν ἄριστον λόγον) and the ability "to knit and compose Greek fables" (μύθων Ἑλληνικῶν πλοκὴν καὶ ποιήσεις) (ch. 7). Subsequently, he is sold to the philosopher Xanthos in Samos, and several amusing encounters between the erudite

13 Perry, "Rinuccio's Aesop".

14 Karla, *Vita Aesopi*, pp. 58–61.

15 Editions of these Early Modern Greek translations are in Papathomopoulos, Πέντε δημώδεις μεταφράσεις and Eideneier, Äsop.

16 All references to the text of the *Life* are taken mainly from version G, primarily from the edition of Ferrari, *Romanzo di Esopo*, and the translation of Wills, *The Quest*, pp. 177–225.

master and his witty slave are recorded. In these episodes the ugly and uneducated slave proves himself superior to the philosopher of repute (chs. 20–91). After he successfully interprets a riddle for the Samians, and offers them, as a result, wise political advice regarding the threat posed by Croesus, Aesop wins his freedom and travels to the court of the Persian king, where, by means of his clever tales, he earns the admiration of the king and, along with it, the promise of peace for his fellow Samians. He returns to the island in triumph, and is awarded special honours by the population (chs. 92–100). The narrative now leaps forward in time and reports Aesop's decision to travel around the world. And so he does gaining recognition and honours everywhere. In Babylon, at the court of King Lycoros, Aesop is offered a high administrative position, when he helps the king win a series of riddle contests against his enemies – such a riddle contests having taken the place of wars – and as a result he brings prosperity to Babylon (chs. 101–23). Aesop, however, decides to continue his journey around the world, until he arrives at Delphi. There, contrary to his expectations, he is not welcomed by the residents of the city. He then tells them an insulting tale, whereupon the people of Delphi make false accusations against him and sentence him to death. Aesop tries to save his life by narrating various tales, but in vain. Without any hesitation the people of Delphi drive him to the edge of a cliff and push him over. Shortly afterwards the city is afflicted by a disease. However, "when the Greeks, Babylonians, and Samians heard of Aesop's execution they avenged his death" (chs. 124–42).

Structure

An article published by Holzberg in 1992 has been very influential in spreading the view that the *Life* is a literary work, complete in itself. In contrast to those critics who suggested that the *Life* is merely a conglomeration of elements drawn at random from various sources, he proposed a literary reappraisal of the work and through structural analysis demonstrated the unity and cohesion of the *Life*. In his article, Holzberg divides the *Life* into five units, in accordance with the structure of a New Comedy play:

1. Introduction / Pre-history (1–19)
2. Aesop and Xanthos (20–91)
   - 2.1. Aesop comes as slave to the house of Xanthos (20–33)
   - 2.2. Aesop plays tricks on his master (34–64)
   - 2.3. Aesop helps his master ([65–67] 68–91)
3. Aesop helps the Samians (92–100)

4. Aesop helps the king of Babylon Lycoros (101–123)
5. Aesop in Delphi: he cannot help himself (124–142).[17]

Recently, Ruiz-Montero also divided the *Life* into five units, and uses Propp's morphology of the folk tale[18] to study the composition of the text.[19] However, the five units can be reduced to three large units,[20] which in turn may be divided into smaller sections as follows:

A. Chs. 1–100 Aesop as slave
- Ch. 1 prooemium (origin, social status, and description of Aesop)
- Chs. 2–9 (miracle of Isis, restitution of Justice) "Birth" of the *logopoios*.
- Chs. 10–20 (10–11 Aesop is handed over to Zenas – a kind of first sale for Aesop; 12–20 Aesop is sold to the slave trader Ophelion – Aesop is sold for a second time)
- Chs. 21–100 Aesop in Samos
  - Chs. 21–27: Aesop is sold to Xanthos (third sale for Aesop)
  - Chs. 28–80: various humorous episodes involving Aesop and Xanthos
  - Chs. 81–98: Aesop and the Samians. Aesop wins his freedom
  - Chs. 99–100: Aesop and Croesus. Aesop returns to Samos (conclusion of the first part – deification of Aesop)

B. Chs. 101–23: Aesop in the service of the Babylonian king Lycoros.
- 101–11: Aesop at the court of Lycoros, in Babylon.
- 112–23: Aesop at the court of Nectanebo in Memphis. His return to Babylon (conclusion of the second part – deification of Aesop)

C. Chs. 124–42: Aesop at Delphi and his death
- The cause (the insult and the reaction of the people of Delphi)
- Aesop is imprisoned and condemned to death.
- Aesop's various attempts to save himself (narration of fables, refuge to the sanctuary of the Muses)
- Aesop's death and deification.

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17 Holzberg, "Strukturanalytische Interpretation", p. 41. The model of the five-section division of the *Life* has been accepted by several critics who proposed in turn a number of minor changes; cf. for instance Merkle, "Fable", pp. 212–13, 217–19; Jouanno, *Vie d'Ésope*, p. 28; Hägg, *The Art of Biography*, p. 112; Ruiz-Montero, "The Life of Aesop", p. 259.

18 Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale.*

19 Ruiz-Montero, "The Life of Aesop".

20 This tripartite structure of the *Life* is also proposed in Papademetriou, *Αἰσώπεια καὶ Αἰσωπικά*, pp. 21–22.

As regards the first part in particular (chapters 1–100), it is probable that it may have originally been an independent narrative, and that the author of the *Life* incorporated it into his own story, having made the necessary changes. Such a thesis rests on external (title, closure) and internal elements (transformation of the figure of the protagonist, setting, fables, register of language /style).[21] In particular:

- The title of the oldest manuscript (G), which may preserve the version closest to the archetype (G, Perriana), is "The Book of Xanthos the Philosopher and Aesop his Slave. On Aesop's Way/Reversal of Life".[22] This title captures perfectly the content of part one.
- Chapter 100 records the surrendering of the Aesopean fables to the library of King Croesus and the foundation of the Aesopeion in Samos, the deification, that is, of the hero. The dedication of a book (usually of the tale itself) in a temple is a method of closure employed in two ancient novels (*Ephesiaca*, *Apollonii Historia*) and in aretalogies.[23]
- The following chapters 101–23 (which build the so called Babylonian section of the *Life*) are themselves simply a rewriting of the very old *Story of Ahiqar*, a folktale of oriental (may-be Babylonian or Persian) origin, which circulated in Aramaic as earlier as 500 BC (as a papyrus fragment from Elephantine witnesses), and was probably available in Greek since the early Hellenistic period. The fact that this part of the *Life* organically incorporates an independent text strengthens the hypothesis that the Samos-section

21 On this topic, see Holzberg, "Strukturanalytische Interpretation", pp. 64–65 with particular emphasis to the chapters 92–100; Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, pp. 12–14. According to Hägg, "A Professor and his Slave", p. 183, "the introductory part is a mixture of old (*pharmakos* rite) and new (Isis); the Xanthos part, which takes up half the text, is probably Hellenistic in substance; the Samos-Lydia part may be mostly a new invention; the Babylon-Memphis part has an old oriental model; the Delphi part is again a mixture of old and new".

22 Βίβλος Ξάνθου τοῦ φιλοσόφου καὶ Αἰσώπου δούλου αὐτοῦ. Περὶ τῆς ἀναστροφῆς Αἰσώπου. See the comment on the title in Hägg "A Professor and his Slave", pp. 183–84; Ludwig, *Sonderformen*, p. 17.

23 Aretalogy is a statement about the miraculous act (often healing) of a god. On aretalogy see especially Reitzenstein, *Wundererzählungen*, pp. 8–12; M. Haase, "Aretalogien", as well as Jördens, "Aretalogies". – Such reports are very often deposited in the libraries of temples: for example, the aretalogy *Διὸς Ἡλίου μεγάλου Σαράπιδος ἀρετὴ ἡ περὶ Συρίωνα τὸν κυβερνήτην* ("The Great Deed of Zeus-Helios-Sarapis Concerning the Helmsman Syrion", POxy. 11, no 1382) is registered in the libraries of Mercurius. Further examples are to be found in Merkelbach "Novel and Aretalogy", pp. 283–85. See also Merkelbach, *Isis-regina*, p. 220.

may also have originally been an independent narrative. The adaptation of the *Story of Ahiqar* shows the mind of the author of the *Life* at work in how he employs his compositional technique.[24] With similar ease, he could have incorporated another part (the Samos-narrative) into his work as well. This second part, too, closes with the deification of the anti-hero Aesop.

- In the first part, particular emphasis is placed on the motif of Aesop's ugliness, which becomes a literary tool. This is later used in a series of antithetical pairings, notably 'external appearance/internal merit', 'ugliness/cleverness', 'servant/master', 'slave/free', or as a cause for laughter, or in order to bring about suspense and surprise alike in both the internal (intradiegetic) audience and the external receptors of the work (listening or reading audiences). The ugliness motif appears just once in the second part (ch. 121 σαπρόμορφον καὶ κατάρατον "unsightly and accursed fellow"),[25] and nowhere, not even implicitly, in the third part.
- There are notable differences in the representation of Aesop between the first and the other two parts of the *Life*. While in the second part he embodies the wise counsellor and in the third he resembles a sophist, who "traveled by way of many other cities, demonstrating his wisdom and learning" (ch. 124), in the first part, Aesop is presented as a trickster, a "picaro".
- The setting changes constantly (the market, the house of Xanthos, at a symposium, the public baths, the gardens, and the cemetery) in the first part. By contrast, in the other two parts, the setting changes less frequently.
- The use of fables, which is notably more frequent in the third section, is limited in the first part. Only three fables are included, all near the end of the section, when Aesop addresses the Samian *demos* and Croesus.
- In the first part there are many comic, even satiric elements, and the various exchanges between Aesop and Xanthos generate humor easily and promptly. Likewise, the scatological and sexual vocabulary and in general the language of obscenity (see chs. 75–76), are confined to the first part. There is also the occasional combination of prose and verse text,[26] and the use of lines from Euripides "to make a sententious point".[27]

24 Konstantakos, *Ακίχαρος* III, investigates the incorporation of the Aramaic Story of Ahiqar into the *Life* and illustrates the compositional technique of the anonymous author.

25 The motif of Aesop's ugliness appears once again in ch. 112 only in Westermanniana. More on the motif of ugliness in the second part is in Konstantakos, *Ακίχαρος* III, pp. 377–84.

26 Papathomopoulos, *Aesopus revisitatus*, pp. 19–20, suggests that the conclusion of chapter 3 consists of two iambic trimeters in G and in Westermanniana. See also Hunter, "Rhytmical Language", pp. 240–43.

27 Henderson, "The *Satyrica* and the Greek Novel", p. 489, uses this phrase to refer to the fragments of the *Iolaus*-novel (on which see the chapter by M. Fusillo in this volume, p. 33) and thus highlights its close parallels with the *Satyrica*.

- More generally, in terms of style, the difference between the first part and the other two is clear. In the first part, the narrative is structured principally in the form of internal monologues and dialogues, and as a result the narrative has suspense and speed. In the first part, the language is plain everyday speech, the sentences short and the dialogue vivid. One may also observe the switching between high and low language register, a good example of this change in style being the passages in which Xanthos addresses his students (see for example ch. 23). Here the vocabulary changes and the sentences become more complex. In the other two parts, the style is consistent. It remains plain, but the sentence structure becomes more complex.

Genre

The *Life* belongs to the literary genre of biography, because it records the life story of a character, of the protagonist (an anti-hero in this case) up to his death. It is obvious, however, that the author is not interested in recording the biography of the real Aesop. More probably, the anonymous author of the *Life* is drawing on some narrative about the life of the main hero that contains some historical truth, but he does not hesitate to enrich this narrative with a wide variety of elements. Chapters 101–23 have been inserted into Aesop's biography, as already hinted at, from a version of the *Story of Ahiqar* circulating in Aramaic as early as the 5th century BC, in demotic Egyptian since at least the Ptolemaic period, and in Greek perhaps since the 4th century BC.[28] Anecdotes and stories pertaining to other figures, such as Hesiod, the Seven Wise Men, Socrates and Diogenes of Sinope, and oral material are also used in order to create an appealing popular work.

Notably, the medieval manuscripts that transmit the *Life*, give as a title either Βίος ("Life") Αἰσώπου τοῦ φιλοσόφου (mss. S, A, M), or Διήγησις ("Narration)" (τοῦ) Αἰσώπου (mss. B, P). A single manuscript (V) records the title Βίος καὶ Διήγησις τοῦ βιοφιλοῦς (*sic*) Αἰσώπου ("Life and Narration of Aesop, the Useful for Life"). The oldest manuscript (G), as already pointed out, bears the title "Βίβλος Ξάνθου Φιλοσόφου καὶ Αἰσώπου δούλου αὐτοῦ. Περὶ τῆς ἀναστροφῆς Αἰσώπου".[29] Both διήγημα (tale) and βίβλος (book, writing) were used to

28 On this issue see Konstantakos, *Ακίχαρος* I, pp. 23–36, 158–66, II pp. 17–81, 225–70; also Kussl, "Achikar"; Marinčič, "The Grand Vizier", and for additional bibliography in Beschorner/Holzberg, "Bibliography", pp. 177–78.

29 "The Book of Xanthos the Philosopher and of Aesop his Slave. On Aesop's Way/Reversal of Life". This title has caused much discussion. See Hägg, "A Professor and his Slave", p. 178 and note 34.

describe some ancient Greek novels[30] and indeed the *Life* is extremely close to a novel in terms of the similar expectations that both generated for their readers in antiquity. This naturally, and perhaps rightly, has caused some scholars to use the term "novelistic biography" or "fictional biography" in order to describe the literary genre to which the *Life* belongs.[31]

Is there, then, any relationship between the *Life* and the comic-picaresque narrative represented in Latin literature by the *Satyricon* of Petronius and the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius? According to Adrados "… in the Life of Aesop and in others … more or less parallel texts, a new genre, full of possibilities, the comic-realistic novel, was created".[32] Certain critics see in the *Life* the ancestor of "Schelmenroman",[33] or the Spanish "picaresque novel" of the Renaissance, a genre to which *Don Quixote* belongs.[34]

My principal objection to this view is that this characterization does not apply to the *Life*'s narrative as a whole. The first part (chapters 1–100), indeed, contains all the features one might expect to find in a comic-picaresque narrative, but this is not the case for the second part (in which the *Story of Ahiqar* is incorporated), nor for the third part (the undeserved death of Aesop at Delphi). Accordingly, if we wish to regard the *Life* of Aesop as one of the earliest samples of the comic-realistic genre, then we must restrict our study to the first part.

Thus, if we accept that the first part of the *Life* (chs. 1–100) was originally a separate text, there can be no doubt that this work is a very early Greek literary example of the comic-picaresque narrative, if not the earliest. Henderson, who has recently studied this type of narrative, which, as we noted earlier, is the literary ancestor of Petronius' *Satyricon* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, has found in the papyrus fragments of the *Iolaus* and in the 41 fragments of the so-called *Protagoras* several of the above listed features that characterize the *Life*. According to Henderson, a narrative of this type should be distinctly "novelistic, prosimetric and obscene; [one] that featured … picaresque adventures among the lower orders; that mixed high and low registers; and that included

30 The colophon to a 2nd-3rd-centuries AD papyrus fragment from Book 2 gives the title τὰ περὶ Καλλιρόην διηγήματα; see details in Whitmarsh, "Titles and Genre", p. 590.

31 See Wills, *The Quest*, p. 23; Holzberg, "The Genre", pp. 22–23. On the hybrid character of the *Life* as a literary genre see also Ruiz-Montero, "The Life of Aesop", pp. 257–58.

32 Adrados, "The Life of Aesop", p. 97.

33 Holzberg, "Ein vergessener griechischer Schelmenroman".

34 Adrados, "The Life of Aesop", p. 93.

parody of romantic motifs if not of romantic novels themselves".[35] All these characteristics are to be found in the first part of Aesop's *Life*.

Interaction with Other Literary Genres – Sources

Furthermore, the author of the *Life* extensively used rhetorical exercises from school texts (*progymnasmata*), such as *chreia* (anecdote), *diegema* (narrative), *enkomion* (praise), *psogos* (invective), and *mythos* (fable).[36] Fables make up a considerable part of the *Life*. Their presence in the text is even more significant, in that the protagonist appears both as the inventor and narrator of the stories, which aim, at the same time, to instruct, counsel, protest, or warn. Still, additional literary tropes, beyond the rhetorical techniques noted above, seem to have influenced the composition of the *Life*. A careful reader can discern several intertextual references: the text displays an intensive dialogue with other literary genres, notably novel, comedy, aretalogy, mime, and even with works of Christian literature, such as the Gospels, the lives of saints and the Apocrypha.

A number of literary motifs in the *Life* are also to be found in the Hellenistic erotic novel.[37] Such are the decisive role of: divine intervention, dreams and divinations, travel, attempted but just thwarted suicides, the exchange of letters, unruly crowds, the corruption of a servant or a friend (in the *Life* the corruption of Aesop's adopted son), the buying and selling of slaves, and, finally, *Scheintod*, or more precisely, the entombment of persons still alive. The main difference between the *Life* and erotic novels is the fact that in the latter all is centered on the erotic element, while in the *Life* this very element is relegated to the margins, only occurring in episodes of secondary importance (e.g. chapters 75–76, 103). Moreover, the erotic theme in the *Life* is light-hearted and comical, modelled on brief and widely circulating love stories containing vivid sexual descriptions, such as the *Milesiaka* of Aristides, (2nd century BC)

35 Henderson, "The *Satyrica* and the Greek Novel", p. 489. The date he proposes for the emergence of this particular genre category ("Such works begin to appear in the second sophistic era, not long after the appearance of the first romantic novels, with both varieties reaching their hey-day in the 2nd century AD"), does not seem to differ substantially from the date of the *Life*, although the first part (the Xanthos section) may date back to the Hellenistic era, see above, note 21.

36 Shiner, "Episodic Narratives", pp. 159–61; Ruiz-Montero, "The Life of Aesop", p. 267.

37 I have discussed in detail the relationship between the *Life* and the erotic novel, in Karla, "Fictional Biography".

or other tales of adultery.[38] Lastly, novels typically have a happy end, whereas the *Life* ends dramatically, with the hero's death.

Likewise, the influence of Old and New Comedy is evident in the *Life*. The vocabulary and the satirical language used to describe specific human characters, such as Xanthos, his wife and the maids, are closely related to the vocabulary and language of Aristophanic comedy.[39] Critics have detected several similarities between the *Life* and New Comedy in terms of structure and overall presentational techniques, as well as in the motifs employed in both genres.[40] Jouanno correctly calls the *Life* a "biographie comique", thus emphasizing the common features between the *Life* and comedy in general: Old and New, Greek and Roman. These common features include an emphasis on the ugliness of Aesop, frequently conveyed through similes that liken him to some animal, as well as on scatology, eroticism and misogyny, and lastly through the description of a world where everything is topsy-turvy and hierarchy and authority are subsequently mocked.[41] Of course, critics have already remarked on the influence Aesop's character and fables exercised upon Aristophanes and in doing so have demonstrated a two-way interaction, the interrelation of traditions and genres, always evident when popular characters like Aesop are involved.[42]

Merkelbach, in turn, discerns traces of an aretalogy of Isis in chapters 4–8.[43] These chapters record the miracle performed by Isis, whereby Aesop acquires a voice and special oratorical skills. Indeed, the entire first part (chapters 1–100) contains several elements typical of an aretalogy. The narrative emphasizes the miracle performed by the goddess, during which Aesop is cured and acquires what she desires for him, that is, a voice and excellent rhetorical faculties (φωνὴν καὶ ἄριστον λόγον). The episodes recorded after the miracle, and especially those that reportedly take place in Samos, can be regarded as constituting the completion of the miracle that had been set in motion earlier, since they feature an Aesop who not only has a voice, which is the gift of Isis, but is also now notable for his λόγων εὕρεμα καὶ μύθων Ἑλληνικῶν πλοκὴν καὶ ποιήσεις

38 See Konstantakos, "Aesop Adulterer and Trickster", pp. 565–80; Weinreich, *Der Trug des Nektanebos*. Konstantakos suggests that this Aesopic story may also involve a gross parody of the stock motifs of idealistic love found in New Comedy or the erotic novel.

39 Goins, "The Influence of Old Comedy".

40 Holzberg, "Strukturanalytische Interpretation", pp. 43, 45–50, 71–74.

41 Jouanno, "Une biographie comique".

42 The motifs Aristophanic comedy shares with the *Life* have been identified and interpretated variously; see Cataudella, "Aristofane"; Luzzatto, "Esopo"; Schirru, *La Favola in Aristofane*, pp. 39–55.

43 Merkelbach, *Isis-regina*, pp. 222–23.

(the gifts of the Muses, "who bestowed upon him the power to compose and elaborate Greek tales" ch. 7). At the end, in place of an epilogue, two significant acts take place: "He (Aesop) then wrote down for the king all the sayings and fables that are even now still recounted, and deposited them in the library";[44] his deification comes immediately afterwards, for the Samians offer him special honours and name the spot "The Place of Aesop" (Αἰσώπειον).[45]

The genre of the mime, too, must have influenced the *Life*. Ludwig and Andreassi studied the relationship between the *Life* and mime, and identify common stylistic elements and motifs.[46] The episode with the figs (chs 2–3),[47] the miracle of Isis (ch. 8), the scenes from the sale of Aesop (ch. 24), and the episode concerning the missing pig's leg (ch. 42) all share stylistic elements with mime.[48] A comparison between the *Life* and the mime handed down in POxy. 413, known as Μοιχεύτρια (*Adulteress*), yields notable verbal similarities between the two texts, evident, for example, in the use of the some particular words like σκάπτειν ("dig"), βινητιᾶν ("inire, coïre cupio"), and κέρκος ("tail"). Various common motifs, such as Aesop the slave, the mute Aesop, the ugly Aesop, the illicit affair with the wife of his master, the sexual adventures of the two lovers, the Apollonian element and death are also to be found.[49] Admittedly, we cannot exclude the possibility of the existence of a common source and of a tradition centered around the legendary Aesop, literary or otherwise, or in the form of oral and written legends and tales, on which both anonymous authors may have independently drawn.[50] Be that as it may,

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44 Αἴσωπος οὖν αὐτῷ συγγραψάμενος τοὺς ἰδίους λόγους καὶ μύθους, τοὺς ἄχρι καὶ νῦν ὀνομαζομένους, κατέλιπεν εἰς τὴν βιβλιοθήκην (ch. 100).

45 The role of the crowd in an aretalogy is very important; see Merkelbach "Novel and Aretalogy", pp. 284–86. The reference to the construction of a temple for the Muses, where nonetheless no place is reserved for Apollo, which offends the god, while presaging the end of Aesop, may possibly be the author's own addition, intended to join the first (chs 1–100) and the last (chs 124–142) part.

46 Ludwig, *Sonderformen*, pp. 351–62; Andreassi, "Esopo sulla scena". Yet, since the boundaries separating comedy from the mime are not always clear, the many similar stylistic features and motifs make one sceptical regarding the accuracy of Ludwig's conclusions, especially those concerning the motifs.

47 Two of Aesop's fellow slaves ate the figs that had been preserved for their master, and then accused Aesop of the deed. They expected him to be unable to defend himself because of his dumbness. Aesop, however, by drinking warm water and vomiting, proved his innocence in contrast to his accusers, who in doing the same reveled themselves as the real thieves.

48 Ludwig, *Sonderformen*, pp. 352–56.

49 Andreassi, "Esopo sulla scena", pp. 207–22.

50 Andreassi, "Esopo sulla scena", pp. 224–25.

perhaps we have the remarkable case of a popular figure inspiring the production of literature in which he also plays a leading role. Thus, it is possible to claim that in general mime as a genre influenced the *Life*, and the *Life* in turn influenced the composition of a specific mime with Aesop in the leading role (the *Μοιχεύτρια*).

Scholars have noticed striking similarities between the *Life* and the Gospels, especially the Gospels of Mark and John, mostly in relation to structure and narrative technique (episodic narratives),[51] but also individual motifs (for instance the fearless speech of the protagonist, his rebellion against his social and religious superiors, the typical character of the poisoner).[52] It is remarkable that both the *Life* and the two Gospels begin with some event of decisive importance for the course of the hero's life, and conclude with his unjust death, which later becomes the cause for the foundation of a cult (the "hero-cult pattern").[53] In any case, the language and style exhibit similarities, for in both a considerable part of the story consists of dialogue and interior monologue. A further common denominator lies in the fact that both texts are products of literature written to entertain and instruct, a goal accomplished by, among other means, the use of parables and fables.[54] Finally, similarities of style, narrative technique and, to a lesser extent, motifs, do exist between the *Life* and the *Lives* of Saints, the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Apocrypha*.[55]

Crossing genres, allusion and transgression of register deliberately triggered by the use of low-register language are in harmony with another feature of the *Life*: "incorporating elements of earlier traditions about Aesop as well as adapting anecdotal material about similar figures".[56] The sources for it must therefore have been both written and oral.[57] Very briefly put, the *Life of Aesop* is made up of:[58] (a) legends about Aesop's life as a slave, several of which must have been in circulation at least since the 5th or 4th century BC; (b) countless tales and anecdotes regarding other individuals, which circulated orally or in written form, in historical works, biographies, treatises, anthologies, etc.; many

51 Shiner, "Episodic Narratives".

52 Wills, *The Quest*, pp. 29–31.

53 Wills, *The Quest*, p. 49.

54 On reading the *Life* as if it were a 'gospel', see Pervo, "A Nihilist Fabula", pp. 97–120.

55 More research is needed in this area. Ludwig, *Sonderformen*, p. 387, compared the *Life* with the *Lives* of the Saints (including the Lives of Philaretos, Symeon the Holy Fool and Andrew the Holy Fool), to reach the conclusion that there is no direct association between Byzantine biographies and the *Life*, nor is it possible to show such a link.

56 Hägg, *The Art of Biography*, p. 113.

57 See Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, pp. 6–7.

58 Karla, "Fictional Biography", pp. 24–25.

anecdotes about Hesiod, Diogenes, Socrates, the Seven Sages and other philosophers, for instance, were attributed to Aesop by the author of the *Life*;[59] (c) a version of the widely-known Eastern *Story of Ahiqar*; (d) the legend of the death of Aesop at Delphi, which was already circulating widely in the 5th century BC;[60] (e) popular oral tales, such as the story of the widow of Ephesus. Variations of this novella[61] have also been found in the fabulist Phaedrus and Petronius, both of which derive from the *Milesiaka* of Aristides.[62] Some of the legends about Aesop, such as those concerning his life on Samos, or those about his death at Delphi, might also have been included in the biography of Aesop that prefaced the collection of fables by Demetrios of Phalerum.[63]

The question of the sources leads us to the issue of whether the *Life* may be seen as an 'open biography'.[64] Indeed it displays many of the basic features of "open texts", such as anonymity, stratification of various sources, episodic character and overall fluidity of the narrative structure as well as the widespread geographic distribution, the abundance of translations and versions, and the chameleonic way in which they were transmitted and have come down to us.[65] In this, the *Life* exhibits all the characteristics of an 'open biography', for its text was constructed by the welding or interweaving of older, independent materials which received further embellishments by subsequent adapters during the course of its later transmission. Hence the versions of the *Life* differ

59 Holzberg, "A Lesser Known 'Picaresque' Novel", p. 7; Jouanno, "Une biographie comique", pp. 419–423; Hägg, *The Art of Biography*, pp. 112–13. In particular on the influence of the traditions regarding the Seven Sages on the *Aesop Life*, see Konstantakos, "Trial by Riddle" with full bibliography at pp. 102–03.

60 Generally on the sources of the *Life*, see Holzberg, "A Lesser Known 'Picaresque' Novel", p. 7; West "The Ascription of Fables"; Perry, "Demetrius of Phalerum" esp. pp. 332–34; Zeitz, "Der Aesoproman und seine Geschichte"; La Penna, "Il romanzo di Esopo"; Adrados, *History*, pp. 659–73.

61 It is characterized as a novella or anecdote. See La Penna, "Il romanzo di Esopo", p. 310; Adrados "The Life of Aesop", p. 108; van Dijk, "The Fables", pp. 141–42; Merkle, "Fable", pp. 226–27.

62 See Papademetriou, "Romance without *Eros*", and Adrados, *History*, p. 658. For an extensive bibliography on the *Milesian Tales*, see e.g. Harrison, "The Milesian Tales"; Ferrari/Zanetto, *Le storie di Mileto*.

63 Demetrios of Phalerum (c. 350–280 BC) was an Athenian Peripatetic philosopher and statesman (A.B. Bosworth, s.v. Demetrius (3), *OCD* 1996^3, p. 448). He compiled the first European collection of Aesopic fables, which has not come down to us. Perry, "Demetrius of Phalerum", pp. 332–34. For a different opinion, see Adrados, *History*, pp. 649–54.

64 Konstan, "The Cunning of the Open Text"; Thomas, "Stories without Texts" p. 289; Hägg, *The Art of Biography*, pp. 99–101.

65 See also Fusillo, "Letteratura di consumo", p. 239; Karla, "Fictional Biography", p. 27.

greatly from each other, both in number and sequence of the episodes and in their language and narrative style (detailed or condensed) to such a degree, that the reconstruction of an archetype seems impossible.

Narrative Technique

The *Life* follows a predictable, straightforward and linear narrative offered by an omniscient narrator. Admittedly, the narration begins with the physical description of Aesop, and also reports events from some period during his early life (to this period possibly belongs the episode with the figs, chs. 2–3). But the actual starting point is the miracle of Isis, by which Aesop acquires the ability to speak and receives divine gifts from the goddess and the Muses. From this point onward the life story develops in a strict chronological sequence up to his death; the episodes are described in order, one after the other, like pearls on a thread.[66] Occasionally a tale is embedded within the narration of another, for example chs. 44–50: Aesop's revenge on his mistress is embedded in the episode of the dinner by one of Xanthos' students.

The basic narrative tools used by the author of the *Life* are: a model based on a tripartite division, a climactic plot and a set of contrasting/antithetical opposites.[67] The threefold repetition functions as a leitmotif to be followed through the whole narration. Thus, in addition to the overall tripartite structure of the work (see above), it is to be noted that Aesop is sold as a slave three times, he tries three times to find a human being who is ἀπερίεργον, incurious (chs. 56–64), and, finally, he is thrice deified (see the conclusions of the three separate units). Climactic moments can be observed in several episodes in the course of the narrative. In chapter 42, Xanthos asks for a pretext to whip Aesop; chapter 77, Aesop is actually "beaten diligently" (ἐδάρη ἐπιμελῶς); and chapter 80, Aesop is even imprisoned. The affair between Aesop and the wife of Xanthos is both tripartite and climactic: the first encounter occurrs in chs. 29–33, the second in chs. 44–50 – where it is made clear that πρὸς ἔννουν οἰκέτην οὐδὲν ἰσχύει γυνή ("a woman cannot compete with a household slave for the affections of his master": ch. 44) –, and lastly, in chs. 75–76, the final encounter takes place, in which the faithless and sexually insatiable wife commits adultery with Aesop.

66 On episodic composition in the *Life*, see Shiner, "Episodic Narratives".

67 See Holzberg, "Strukturanalytische Interpretation", pp. 41, 47, 51; Ruiz-Montero, "The Life of Aesop", p. 262.

The motif of antithesis (opposition) dominates the work. In the first part, in particular, the narrative emphasizes the contrast between Aesop's physical appearance and his great intelligence.[68] Aesop makes his first appearance as a member of the group of slaves belonging to Ophelion and who are on sale. Some among them are distinguished by their beauty: "very handsome young men, exceedingly radiant as Dionysos or Apollo" (παῖδας καλλίστους, πάντας καθαρωτάτους ὡς Διονύσους καὶ Ἀπόλλωνας ch. 16) while Aesop himself is ugly (σαπρός /σαπρόμορφος).[69] When Aesop next joins Xanthos' household, multiple contrasts emerge, Aesop being an ugly and uneducated slave, while Xanthos and his students are free citizens, rich and educated. In due course the latter will be shown to be fools in the face of the Phrygian slave's intelligence and his readiness of speech (see also the antithesis in the meaning of their names, Xanthos=blond / Aesop=Aithiop=black).

In the chronotopic structure of the *Life* space takes precedence over time.[70] In fact, there is no precise chronological framework underlying the *Life*. Instead, we have only general expressions signaling the passage of time (e.g. "next day", "on that particular day" etc.). The reader has the impression that the narrative action is situated within an a-temporal frame and no effort is made to locate it in the real archaic period, in which the historical hero lived. The author even introduces conspicuous anachronisms, for example, by dating Aesop to the time of Nectanebo, the last native Pharaoh of Egypt, who became a mythical figure in the Roman era,[71] or making references to Euripides and Demosthenes.

On the contrary, narrative space is given a central position in the *Life*, whose spatial coordinates are always concrete. Aesop is first transported from an unnamed place to be sold as a slave in Ephesus. He is then brought to Samos, to be taken into the service of the philosopher Xanthos for a certain period of time. We later see him at the court of Croesus, and again back on Samos where

68 Other dichotomies to be observed include those of justice / injustice, piety / impiety, usefulness for the other / uselessness for one's own self.

69 The ugliness of Aesop and his status as a slave are repeatedly highlighted. This may be a deliberate effort to parody the depiction of the heroes of the erotic novel, who are typically handsome and of noble descent. For the contrast between Aesop's appearance and the dazzling beauty of the heroes of the erotic novels, see Papademetriou, *Aesop as an Archetypal Hero*, pp. 17–18. On the link between the ugliness of the slave Aesop and Greek and Roman Comedy, see Jouanno, "Une biographie comique", pp. 398–400.

70 The term "chronotope" was coined by the Russian critic Michail Bakhtin, to indicate the spatial-temporal frame of a narrative: Bachtin, *Dialogic imagination*, pp. 84–258. Particularly on the chronotope of the *Life* see Avlamis, "Isis", pp. 88–97.

71 On this issue see Konstantakos, "Nektanebo", in particular p. 116.

he expresses the desire "to travel around the world" (ch. 101); in Babylon he serves at the court of Lycoros. As an envoy of Lycoros he travels to Egypt and meets King Nectanebo and finally, after "travelling around the rest of the cities", he reaches his final destination, Delphi, where he meets his end.

Ugliness, cunning and wit, eloquence and wisdom are the main themes in Aesop's *Life*. Thus the protagonist becomes the archetype of the anti-hero, the monstrously ugly, yet exceptionally gifted individual, the cunning slave who gains recognition and admiration, the trickster. Right from the very beginning, Aesop is called βιωφελέστατος (a great benefactor)[72] and his *Life* is an amusing, entertaining and, at the same time, very edifying literary work.

The Reception of the *Life* in Late Byzantine Times

The prolific scholar, teacher and monk of the Palaiologan era, Maximos Planoudes (1255–1305), rewrote the *Life* and fables in atticizing prose[73] probably for didactic purposes.

The Planoudean version reveals a lot regarding the transmission of the *Life* in Byzantium. To begin with, Planoudes' work shows how the linguistic register of a popular text written in the vernacular, the language of everyday speech, is transformed into the archaizing language of learned Greek, and in general, what linguistic and structural changes an earlier popular text requires in order to meet the expectations of Byzantine learned readers. The brief, entirely functional prologue to the *Life* is replaced with a more studied proem, written by the reviser himself.[74] More particularly, Planoudes' prologue is an ethical and philosophical text that repeatedly uses the antithetical pairs 'rational / irrational', 'deed / word', 'nature / law', 'free / slave', 'soul / body' (λογικός – ἄλογος, ἔργον – λόγος, φύσις – νόμος, ἐλεύθερος – δοῦλος, ψυχή – σῶμα), and features throughout references to classical authors as Homer (Aesop is compared to the Homeric Thersites) and Plato (*Gorgias*). Furthermore, the dialogues and the monologues of the original have become third-person narratives, and the original text has been summarized and condensed throughout.

72 Hägg, *The Art of Biography*, p. 104, translates the expression πάντα βιωφελέστατος as "the most useful in all vicissitudes of life" and points out its meta-textual dimension which allows interpreting *bios* both as 'life' and as *Life*.

73 On arguments for the identification of the translator of the *Life* (this Byzantine version has been named Accursiana or Planoudea) with Planoudes, see Karla, "Die Redactio Accursiana".

74 On Planoudes' habit of writing a prologue for all the works he comments on or paraphrases, see Karla, "Die Redactio Accursiana", p. 666.

Finally, according to Planoudes' customary style, passages with explicit or implicit sexual content and those involving obscenity are removed from his text.[75] Planoudes' working method in the *Life* is notably very similar to the way he worked when editing learned literary texts. In the case of the *Life,* he used an ancestor of manuscript B (Londinensis Add. gr. 17015) as the basis of his translation, but he obviously also used one or more manuscripts from other recensions.[76]

When looking at the reception of Planoudes' version, the large number of manuscripts (the oldest of them dating back to the late 14th century) that transmit it is striking. The first editor, Eberhardt, made use of 13 manuscripts as he was preparing his critical edition of 1872. Marc adds another 13,[77] and I have little doubt that a meticulous search of the updated manuscript catalogues in libraries worldwide would considerably increase this number. Moreover, three of the five modern Greek versions of the *Life* are based on Planoudes' version of the text, and another one at least used it as a secondary source.[78]

I should also remark that Planoudes' version of the *Life* is also transmitted among various manuscripts of other, mainly rhetorical works of his.[79] One such manuscript is codex Marcianus 11, 2 of the 15th century, which is the "Leithandschrift" of the Eberhard edition. It begins with the *Life* and the fables, and continues with the *corpus planudeum* on rhetoric, that is, Planoudes' commentary on Aphthonius and Hermogenes, thus giving a strong hint to the didactic function of the text.[80]

At about the same time, the scholar Andrew Livadenos (1314–61?) produced a manuscript, held today in the State Library of Bavaria in Munich (Codex Monacensis gr. 525), that contains different texts of considerable thematic variety from many different eras. The composition of this particular selection is of great interest for the study of Byzantine literature.[81] The codex starts with the *Life of Aesop* (under the title of *Life of Aesop, the Philosopher/ Βίος Αἰσώπου τοῦ φιλοσόφου*), and continues with the *Fables*. There then follows Aesop's *proverbiorum sylloge*, the *fables* of Syntipas, a letter by the philosopher Diocles to the king [of Persia] Antigonos, the story of *Stephanites and Ichnelates*, a frag-

75 See Karla "Maximos Planoudes", in particular on *Life*, pp. 221–23.

76 Karla, *Vita Aesopi*, pp. 58–65.

77 Marc, "Überlieferung", pp. 389–99.

78 Karla, "Die Redactio Accursiana", p. 669, note 65.

79 Karla, "Die Redactio Accursiana", p. 664.

80 Karla, "Die Redactio Accursiana", p. 664, where more examples are listed.

81 This is studied in detail in Hinterberger, "Ο Ανδρέας Λιβαδηνός".

ment of the *Book of Syntipas* and the third poem of *Ptochoprodromos*.[82] The manuscript continues with other texts, but I restrict myself to the first group of texts included in this collection, the others being far removed from the focus of the present study.[83]

This first category of texts (to whom the *Life* belongs) involves similar subjects. All are useful and educational texts, intended to offer instruction and, at the same time, entertainment.[84] Collections of popular texts, such as this one, in which edification and entertainment are essential goals, also appear in other manuscripts containing the *Life*.[85] Common features of these texts are the advisory character and a simple narrative style, involving short episodic narratives, as well as a low linguistic register. As already noted, the corpus of texts of Monacensis gr. 525 is probably a representative selection of the sort of Byzantine texts a scholar such as Andrew Livadenos would have read and used. Various testimonies make it clear that texts of this kind, among which the *Life of Aesop* held a leading position, literally and metaphorically, were extremely popular at the imperial and other courts during the Palaiologan period.[86]

The codex 397 of Pierpont Morgan Library is another interesting case-study. It contains some popular instructional texts, like a fragment of *Kalila and Dimna* (= *Stephanites and Ichnelates*), a fragment of *Physiologus*, the *Life* and the *Fables* of Aesop, the *Fables* of Babrius and seven anecdotes of the *Philogelos*.

In codex Baroccianus 194, of the 15th century, the *Life* once again is the first in a corpus of instructional texts, alongside others such as Cato's *Gnomai* and collections of mythological examples. Here the *Fables* do not follow the initial group, and this strengthens the view that the reception of the *Life* should not necessarily be associated with that of the *Fables*. The *Life* does not function as a prologue, as a frame for the fables themselves.[87] It is instead an independent, stand-alone text, and as such was transmitted through time in isolation, to be eventually received in Byzantium.

82 Hinterberger, "Ο Ανδρέας Λιβαδηνός", p. 27. On both *Syntipas* and *Stephanites* see the chapters by B. Krönung and I. Toth in this volume.

83 According to Hinterberger, the texts transmitted in Monacensis gr. 525 belong to four different categories, while Bühler, *Zenobii Athoi proverbia*, pp. 170–79, distinguishes five different groups.

84 Hinterberger, "Ο Ανδρέας Λιβαδηνός", pp. 40–41.

85 One such manuscript is Codex Mosquensis gr. 436. For a detailed description of the codex see Karla, *Vita Aesopi*, pp. 26–29. See an additional example in Hinterberger, "Ο Ανδρέας Λιβαδηνός", p. 40.

86 Hinterberger, "Ο Ανδρέας Λιβαδηνός", pp. 39–42.

87 The independence of the *Life* from the *Fables* is discussed in Holzberg, *Fabel*, pp. 80–84.

One further case worth mentioning is the codex Atheniensis, Benaki Museum 54 from the 13th/14th century, which preserves the Aesopic corpus of *Fables*, *Proverbs* and *Life*, among theological texts giving practical advice, written in a higher linguistic register.[88] For the Byzantines, distinctions made on the basis of language (learned or vernacular) and content (Christian or pagan) were not as strict as they are for modern scholarship. On the contrary, the *Life*, thanks to its simple form and its instructional and entertaining content, was promptly categorized in Byzantium as an instructional text. It thereafter followed its own course until the modern era, to become part of the Modern Greek literary tradition.

Having thus looked at the evidence and the work of Byzantine scholars, and the transmission of the text of the *Life* itself, we can perhaps now sum up our survey. The papyrus fragments date to the 3rd-6th/7th centuries, while the earliest codices date to the end of the 10th or the beginning of the 11th centuries (ms. G, codex 397 Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and ms. Th, codex Thessalonicensis, Bibliothecae Universitatis 86[89]). We have no testimony on the text from the 12th century, whereas from the 13th century onwards the number of manuscripts rises.

The character of Aesop, as portrayed in the *Life,* has travelled successfully through the ages as it can easily adapts to many different cultural contexts, yet without the hero himself undergoing any transformation of identity, at least in the Greek speaking world.[90] What changes is the form of the text and the language. The message, or rather, the multiple messages it communicates, are still relevant, and are always instructive and beneficial. In the middle of the work, in chapter 88, the author of the *Life* inserted a very instructive message: "you should consider my intelligence not my appearance … many people with the worst appearance are intelligent".[91] We might ask ourselves whether the message of the *Life* is in fact a meta-literary comment, and, in a way, a parody of learned literature,[92] of grandiloquent speech and its excessiveness. Form is not what matters the most; rather it is the content, the interior that counts.[93]

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88 A detailed description of this codex is in Karla, *Vita Aesopi*, pp. 20–24.

89 This is a parchment folio kept today in the main library of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. A description is in Karla, *Vita Aesopi*, p. 29.

90 It has already been observed that the figure of Aesop does not convert to Christianity in the various redactions, in contrast to Alexander the Great in the *Alexander Romance;* on this topic see the chapter by U. Moennig in this volume, pp. 159–89.

91 *Life of Aesop*, ed. Ferrari, p. 198: οὐχὶ τὴν ὄψιν δεῖ θεωρεῖν, ἀλλὰ τὴν φρόνησιν σκοπεῖν … πολλοὶ γὰρ μορφὴν κακίστην ἔχοντες νοῦν ἔχουσι σώφρονα.

92 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, pp. 214–15.

93 I am most grateful to the editors of this volume, especially to C. Cupane for perceptive comments and to my colleagues S. Papaioannou, Io Manolessou and A. Farrington for

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CHAPTER 13

Secundus the Silent Philosopher in the Ancient and Eastern Tradition

Oliver Overwien

There exists a number of works of popular philosophy from the Greco-Roman period which enjoyed a notable afterlife far beyond Antiquity. Their contents possessed a cross-cultural resonance, which could be understood and accepted as much by a Greek philosopher or Roman senator as by a Syrian monk, an Arab court official or a medieval bailiff who had a good command of the Latin language. Among these works is the *Vita* of the Silent Philosopher Secundus (thereafter *VS*), which was supposedly composed in Greek around the end of the 2nd century AD. Its content can be summarized as follows:

Secundus is sent by his parents to another city in order to receive an education. There he becomes acquainted with the maxim that every woman is a whore and only those who live in secret are truly chaste. He thus starts to investigate to what degree this saying is true. For this purpose, in disguise, he seeks out his now widowed mother, and asks her whether she would spend the night with him for money. Much to his distress she agrees, and therefore he has to reveal his true identity to her. Shocked at her own behavior, the mother hangs herself, at which point Secundus decides never to speak again.

The Emperor Hadrian learns of the philosopher's vow of silence. He summons him and asks him to proclaim his wisdom. Since Secundus refuses to speak, even under the threat of death, the emperor is extremely impressed and suggests that they communicate in written form. Yet, before Secundus answers his questions on cosmology and ethics, he first explains to the emperor the trivial and frail nature of man, as well as the power of fate.

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Judging from those who read or had at least heard of the *VS*, it becomes clear that the story was known in almost every region around the western as well as eastern Mediterranean and its influence was felt for over a thousand years.

Since the *VS* during the first few hundred years after its composition seems to have only existed in few places in the West (see below, pp. 348–49), its spread within this tradition appears to have really begun with the Latin translation of William Medicus, monk and later abbot of the monastery of St. Denis in Paris, whose work was completed in the second half of the 12th century.[1] The influence and popularity of this text is not only demonstrated by the fact that it was handed down in over 100 manuscripts from 12th–15th centuries, but also that it provided the direct or indirect basis for numerous further translations into Spanish, German, French, Italian, and even Icelandic. Based on these translations the work appeared in different literary genres in the respective languages. The tenor of the *VS* caused it to be often read not only as a captivating story, but also as a model for specific scientific and moral issues.[2]

In the Near East, by contrast, its transmission unfolded in a less linear way. At first, we have a translation into Armenian, which perhaps originated in the 6th–7th centuries AD.[3] By the 5th century AD we know that Armenia was subject to a great deal of Greek influence, with the result that several, mainly scientific and philosophical Greek texts were translated into the local language. Among them were the medical writings of Hippocrates and Galen, commentaries on the works of Aristotle,[4] but also the *VS*, as a paradigm of Hellenic ethics.

Furthermore we know about Syriac and Arabic versions of the *VS* (see below, pp. 351–58), with the latter in turn serving as the basis for an Ethiopic translation.[5] Provided that the *Book of Sindbad* actually originated within a Persian

1 The Latin text of William Medicus is found in *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 92–100.

2 On the *Nachleben* of the *Vita* in the West see *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 23–45, as well as d'Agostino, "Una versione"; Lage Cotos, "Secundus"; Lage Cotos, "La recepción"; Lage Cotos, "Secundus entre las flores"; Lage Cotos, "Una cadena"; Wachinger, "Secundus" and Warnar, "The Dominican", pp. 50–52.

3 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 55–58; translation on pp. 108–18; Armenian text in Appendix II of Perry's edition.

4 See e.g. *L'œuvre de David l'Invincible et la transmission de la pensée grecque dans la tradition arménienne et syriaque*, ed. V. Calzolari/J.R. Barnes (Philosophia Antiqua 116), Leiden 2009, and Vardanian, "Medieval Armenian medicine", pp. 199–209.

5 Text and translation in *Secundus*, ed. Perry, Appendix IV. Its dependence was already determined by Bachmann, *Das Leben*, pp. 3–8. A newer edition, including an (English) translation of the Ethiopic version, is offered in *The Life of Skendes the Wise*, ed. C. Sumner, Addis Ababa 1981, and Sumner, "The Source", pp. 100–22.

milieu around 800 AD, we can conclude that there was an awareness of the *VS* in this tradition as well. In fact, the *Book of Sindbad* exhibits clear parallels with the narrative structure of the *VS*, allowing us to conclude that the unknown Persian author was familiar with the biography of the Silent Philosopher.[6]

But how do we explain the popularity of the *VS*? To answer this question, I shall first analyse the work and explore the underlying literary and philosophical elements that make up its structure. I will then investigate, based on the Syriac and Arabic traditions, what precisely contributed to its noteworthy afterlife.

A. The Ancient Tradition

We assume that the *VS* was first written down towards the end of the 2nd century AD. The *terminus ante quem* is provided by a papyrus fragment which contains parts of the work, and which can be dated to the early 3rd century AD (*PROss. Georg I 17*).[7] We know nothing about the author. It is also unclear whether Secundus was a real person or a literary fiction. Theories that connect him with historically tangible persons, such as the rhetor Secundus of Athens, teacher of Herodes Atticus, cannot be proven yet.[8]

A.1 *The Greek Original*

A problem which hitherto has not been solved, regards the number of circulating ancient versions, as well as the question as to the appearance of the Greek original did look like. It is well known that in the genre of popular literature this question is of far smaller relevance compared to 'canonical' authors such as, for example, Plato or Herodotus. Indeed, popular literature usually produces what we now call 'open works', without a fixed wording and even content. On the contrary, copyists and redactors felt entitled to deal freely with the text they had in front them, and did not refrain from augmenting, changing and reworking it in order to fit new contexts and meet different needs. The

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6 See Perry, "The Origin", pp. 1–94, esp. pp. 58–89, and *Persian Wisdom in Arabic Garb. ʿAlī b. ʿUbayda al-Rayḥānī (d. 219/834) and his Jawāhir al-kilam wa-farāʾid al-ḥikam*, ed. M. Zakeri, vol. 1 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science 66), Leiden, Boston 2007, pp. 100–115. For further information, see the article of B. Krönung in this volume, pp. 365–79.

7 The text of this fragment, including commentary, can be found in Gallo, "Frammento della Vita", pp. 415–429.

8 While Bowersock, *Greek Sophists*, pp. 118–20, views this identification as probable, Hunger, "review", p. 364, for example, is rather skeptical, and justifiably so. See also Gallo, "Frammento", pp. 401–03.

various recensions of the *Alexander Romance* could serve here as a striking example.[9]

Although the current definitive edition of the *VS* of B.E. Perry, from 1964, can be seen as exemplary in view of its interdisciplinary approach, it does, however, only give us a rough idea of the complex ancient transmission of the text and of the Greek original. This is in part due to the state of research at the time, but also due to Perry's editorial methodology, which is not always comprehensible. As the basis for the edition of his Greek text, he chose only a single textual witness: the *codex Vaticanus Reginensis Gr. 10* (11th century). This approach was justified, insofar as this codex is the only Greek manuscript containing both the section on Secundus' life and the section with the emperor's questions and Secundus' answers. At the time of Perry's edition, there were a further 15 Greek manuscripts from 11th–18th centuries known, these however were either directly or indirectly based on the aforementioned *codex Vaticanus*, or contained only the questions and answers part. Through an examination of the variant readings, Perry came to the conclusion that the tradition is divided into two branches, thereby assigning the *codex Vaticanus Reginensis Gr. 10* as well as the Armenian, Syriac and Latin translations to one branch, and the Arab version to another.[10] Perry thus offered in his edition of the Greek text only a part of the ancient tradition. Even though he was aware of this, he nevertheless corrected the text of the *codex Vaticanus Reginensis Gr. 10* with the help of the above-mentioned papyrus fragment (*PRoss. Georg I 17*), which he did not take into account at all in his *stemma codicum*, as well as with textual witnesses from the other branch tradition, thus producing a contaminated text that never existed in this form. It would have been more correct, from a methodological standpoint, to edit the various Greek versions independently of one another.[11]

The problems, however, continue. Since Perry, a further Greek papyrus from 6th– 7th centuries has become known to us, which also contains a small extract from the biographical section of the *VS*. Moreover, numerous additional Greek manuscripts have emerged, which contain the questions and answers section at least.[12] As such, all of these textual witnesses must also be incorporated into

9 On the different versions of the Greek *Alexander romance* and their respective ideological context see the chapter by U. Moennig in this volume, pp. 159–89.

10 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 10–23.

11 See Gallo, "Biografie", p. 246, and Pearson's review of Perry's edition, pp. 94–95. In addition, Perry appears to have incorrectly understood the tradition of the textual witnesses which were available to him. This conclusion is suggested by the slightly different stemma of Papathomopoulos, "ΟΙ ΓΝΩΜΕΣ", p. 379.

12 See for the papyrus, Menci, "Frammenti di Vita"; for the codices see Papathomopoulos, "ΓΝΩΜΕΣ", p. 313 n. 3, Gallo, "Biografie", p. 246–47, and de Nicola, "Secundi sententia",

any edition of the *VS*; it remains to be seen whether they are identical with the Greek tradition known up to this point, or represent further versions. Furthermore, one has to evaluate the Near Eastern tradition differently from Perry. He assumed that the great length of the Arabic version was due to the translator's verbosity. In his time he was hardly alone in this estimation,[13] but more recent investigations have shown that Arabic translators, particularly from the 9th century, generally took care to reproduce the text verbatim, as far as it was possible.[14] Even when, in isolated cases, Christian interpolations or influences of other narrative traditions do appear in the Arabic version (see below, p. 353 note 64), we can assume that on the whole it is indicative of the Greek original. By way of illustration, two examples should suffice here.

In the version of the *codex Vaticanus Reginensis Gr. 10* the mother / parents of Secundus appear to be natives of Athens, since Hadrian hears of the philosopher after his arrival in Athens.[15] In the recension represented by the Arabic translation, by contrast, Secundus' education takes place in Athens, while his home city, where his mother lives and where the meeting with Hadrian occurs, is not specified.[16] It is quite unlikely that an Arabic translator altered multiple passages in such a way. Several more examples of this sort can be adduced.[17]

The number and nature of the questions Secundus answers in the Arabic version point in the same direction. While the *codex Vaticanus Reginensis Gr. 10* only contains 20 questions, over 50 are to be found in the Arabic recension. As will be demonstrated below (pp. 346-47), these questions do not represent arbitrary interpolations, but rather reflect a world view matching the ideological background of the *Florilegium* compiled by the early Byzantine scholar Stobaeus (5th century AD). Thus, in this instance the Arabic version clearly proves itself to be of Greek origin. Against this background we must conclude

pp. 489–495. See also *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 83 n., and 85 n.

13 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 47; 64, and the reviews by Hunger, p. 365, and Pearson, p. 94. By contrast, Frank showed in his review that some of the instances which Perry regarded as elaborations of the Arabic translator have been falsely evaluated by him. It should be mentioned in passing that Revillout, *Vie et sentences*, p. 40, in his examination of the Arabic version, came to the exact opposite conclusion, namely that the Arabic version is much closer to the original than the surviving Greek versions. Such evaluations ultimately appear to be influenced by the scientific or cultural background of the researcher.

14 See Vagelpohl, "Translation literature", p. 543b.

15 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 70.16–17.

16 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, App. III, pp. 3.10; 13.6–9.

17 For additional examples, in which the supposed additions to the Arabic recension are confirmed by ancient parallels to the *VS*, see Overwien, "Secundus", p. 110 note 15, and p. 111 note 19.

that the Arabic translation, in the form in which it has been handed down to us, represents a further ancient recension of the *VS*, which is to be counted alongside both the already known Greek versions.

The problems briefly touched upon here should give us an idea of how far away we currently are from understanding how many Greek versions of the *VS* existed, and what form the original had. We will come nearer to the solution only by considering the whole of the ancient tradition and comparing in detail the individual versions, particularly the Near Eastern ones, with one another, thereby attempting to separate what is original from later material.

A.2 *Genre*

In Antiquity the term biography was not as strictly defined as today. However, the reason the *VS* is said to be a 'biography' according to the ancient definition of this genre, is due to the word βίος in the title "βίος Σεκούνδου Φιλοσόφου."[18] The structure of the *VS* itself indicates the same. It comprises, in chronological order, single episodes from the protagonist's life as well as sayings in the form of answers at the end, a combination which also characterizes comparable biographies from this time, such as Lucian's *Demonax* (2nd century AD) and the *Lives of the Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius (3rd century AD).[19] Furthermore, the *VS* aims at showing the protagonist as an ethical-moral model. This idea is well integrated throughout the narrative, since Hadrian wants to preserve Secundus' answers in written form as books, so that they can serve as leading principles for posterity.[20] In this way, a similarity with works subsumed under the label 'ancient biography',[21] emerges unambiguously from its formal as well as textual orientation.

A.3 *Structure – Literary Sources*

An ancient biographer was not obliged to depict the whole life of his hero from birth to death. A number of exemplary segments often sufficed to make the character of the protagonist discernable, and to present his way of life as exemplary.[22]

18 See Uytfanghe, "Biographie", p. 1094, and Sonnabend, *Geschichte*, p. 7.

19 On the structure of these works see Goulet-Cazé, "Le livre VI", pp. 3892–908, and Overwien, "Zwei literarisch-philosophische Vorbilder", p. 536.

20 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 90.14–15. On the ethical tenor of ancient biographies see Sonnabend, *Geschichte*, pp. 4–7.

21 See also Hägg, *The art*, pp. 300–04. On this section see in addition Overwien, "Secundus", pp. 106–08.

22 See Dihle, "Die Entstehung", pp. 8–9.

Secundus' salient attribute is, of course, his silence. Immediately in the introduction it is brought up as a topic, and it is also recalled again in the concluding sentence, so that it functions, in a way, as a frame to the story itself.[23]

Furthermore, this self-imposed ban on speaking gives the background for the scenic configuration of the work: the meeting with the mother and her suicide, prompted by Secundus, provides the rationale for his silence (Scene 1). In the presence of the Emperor Hadrian the philosopher, by contrast, proves himself to be a man of strong and imperturbable character – and thus a true philosopher – by his refusal to speak (Scene 2). Lastly, his answers to the emperor's questions serve to evince silence as a philosophical principle, since Hadrian already knew the reason for Secundus' taciturnity after reading the questions.

Nevertheless, it is striking that the author did not restrict himself to providing a sober and functional description of the two aforementioned scenes, but rather borrowed several literary motifs from very different traditions to give the action a dramatic veneer.

For the first scene, the meeting with the mother, the author drew on completely independent mythological themes which he connected and reshaped into a new narrative. Thus, the examination of the woman's (wife's) fidelity seems to be based on the story of Cephalus and Procris, as told, for example, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (VII.711ff.). The author took over the motif, but he mingled it with the Oedipus myth (see *Oed. Tyr.*). This explains why Secundus is sent away from home as a child and raised far from his homeland. It also lies behind the scene of – "almost" – sexual intercourse with the mother as well as her subsequent suicide. In addition, the references to Oedipus also explain the destructive effect of Secundus' drive for knowledge, which entirely destroys his familial bonds, as well his decision never to speak again. Just as Oedipus refrained from seeing by carving his eyes out as a self-imposed punishment (*Oed. Tyr.* 1270ff.), Secundus, too, determines to cease using another sensory organ, his voice. Yet, no matter how gruesome the events turn out to be for both men, from this moment on they find their true greatness. Oedipus travels to the gods and becomes the tutelary spirit of Athens (Sophocles, *Oed. K.*), while Secundus can once and for all lead the life of a philosopher.[24]

After the mother's suicide, the setting shifts from the house of Secundus' parents to the royal court; here too, we have two clearly different literary themes combined with one another. First, the author employs the widespread motif of the wise man's meeting with a ruler, known from numerous ancient tales,

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23 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 68.2–3; 90.13–14.

24 On the use of the Oedipus myth in the VS, see also d'Agostino, "Una versione", pp. 197–98.

as the basic framework for the narrative. Here one could recall the meetings between Solon and Croesus, or Alexander the Great and the Cynic Diogenes.[25] The Emperor Hadrian was the right person for staging such a meeting because he was known for holding discussions with learned persons.[26]

Yet, before this standardized encounter between the wise man and the ruler can occur, Secundus has first to prove himself as a philosopher. On that account, the anonymous biographer draws on the typology of trial scenes, developed in the so-called 'pagan martyr acts', which revolve around powerful Alexandrian officials opposing the policies of Roman emperors. The author adopts the basic model of such *Acta Alexandrinorum* and supplies it with a climatic ending. Thus Hadrian attempts to make Secundus talk in three ways. First he pursues his goal with friendly words, and he then orders a tribune to stop Secundus' silence. As this also has no effect, Hadrian finally orders to have him executed, yet privately specifying that this has only to be done, should Secundus break his silence in the face of death.[27]

The meaning of this narrative device is to be seen on two levels. Firstly, it clarifies Hadrian's metamorphosis from a philosopher-emperor, fond of interrogating savants, to a despot and tyrant. His behavior is diametrically opposed to that of Secundus, who despite all the adverse circumstances remains consistently true to his position and as a result proves himself to be superior to the emperor.

In addition, the dramatic climax fulfills a second function in the broader context of the story. Whereas in the first scene it is Secundus' mother who has to undergo a kind of trial, which she cannot successfully overcome on account of her libidinous female nature, he now masterfully passes his own test of wisdom. Consequently, self-control cannot be a female affair, it can only be found in a strong philosopher's character.[28]

A.4 *Philosophical Doctrine*

Five issues make up the whole of Secundus' philosophical doctrine.

He starts with some remarks on the *physis* of man (1) and on fate (2), emphasizing the frailty of human nature and its short lifespan. He then turns to the question of what power governs man's life. While he gives no definitive answer to this question, he is nonetheless convinced that no human being has any

25 Additional information in Gray, "Xenophon's Hiero".

26 See also Stertz, "Semper in omnibus", p. 622.

27 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 72.2–19.

28 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 74.12. On this chapter, see as well Overwien, "Secundus", pp. 108–14.

power over his own fate. Nothing at all is said about gods, we are only told of τύχη (chance), δαίμων (demon) and μοῖρα (destiny), all of them a barely discernable, often ominous power, whose workings are unfathomable.[29]

In the subsequent questions and answers, three other subjects are addressed: cosmology (3), psychology-physiology (4), and ethics (5).[30] The first part of this question-and-answer catalogue (nos. 1–17) concerns cosmological issues. By this are meant astronomical, meteorological, geographical and theological topics, which form together a picture of the world's structure and development, while the following nos. 18–20 address psychological-physiological topics. The third and final section, nos. 23–52, makes up the bulk of the whole dialogue section. It entails questions and answers concerning human life in general, and more particularly everyday life, and are thus to be regarded as ethical issues.

In searching for Greek sources or parallels for this sort of discussion, one has first to look at the *Doxography* of Aëtius (1st century A.D), a work preserved only in a 2nd century AD epitome attributed to Plutarch, under the title *Placita*. Another, even more likely parallel is perhaps the so-called *Florilegium* of Stobaeus (5th cent. AD), this being a thematically- arranged collection of textual excerpts, poetic verses and sayings based to a large extent on the *Placita*. Stobaeus, in particular, describes – in part with identical wording – every topic from the areas of cosmology, psychology / physiology and ethics that Secundus touches upon in his answers; individual chapters of his *Florilegium* are also dedicated to fate, as well as to the *physis* of man.[31] In other words, all five aspects of Secundus' doctrine are contained in the work of Stobaeus.[32]

The parallelism between the *VS* and the *Florilegium* of Stobaeus, however, not only provides important insights to the structure of the question-and-answer segment, it also has consequences as to the intention and philosophical background of the *VS*. As already stated, the doctrine of Secundus consists of five points which touch upon the fundamental questions of human existence: What am I (*physis*)? What governs my life (fate)? How is the universe structured (cosmology)? How does man function (psychology-physiology)? How should I behave (ethics)? As a result, Secundus' answers produce a quite com-

29 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 74.24–78.8.

30 In what follows, I will use as a base text the one version of the *VS* only preserved in Arabic translation (see *Secundus*, ed. Perry, App. III, pp. 27.2–54.8). We do this, because it is based on a (lost) Greek model, as the following remarks will demonstrate.

31 On which in detail see Overwien, "Secundus", pp. 118–20.

32 On the life and work of Stobaeus, see Piccione/Runia, "Stobaios".

prehensive, yet ultimately widely-held worldview, which does not follow any specific philosophical tradition.

This general tenor is made evident via the rhetorical configuration of the gnomic answers, which do not consist of long, complex sentences, as one would expect in view of the substantial relevance of the corresponding questions, but instead usually consist of only two words. Further, they frequently take an antithetical form, so that they are catchy and easy to memorize.[33] One can thus assume that the doctrine, as it is presented in the question-and-answer section, may have been conceived as a form of propaedeutic, which was meant to make the reader familiar with the fundamental concepts of human existence.

So far, attempts to pin down consistently any specific philosophical doctrine out of the utterances of Secundus have been unsuccessful; their nature and brevity makes this almost impossible. It seems far more likely that the figure of Secundus is not indebted to any particular philosophical tradition, a feature that, as paradoxical as it may seem at first, emphasizes yet further his designation as a Cynic and Pythagorean.[34] We neither learn of a conversion from Cynicism to Pythagoreanism in the *VS*, nor can indications of either doctrine be perceived anywhere. Such denominations are instead more likely to be just labels used for literary purposes. The author of the *VS* needed a Cynic for staging the first scene with the mother, because Cynics were known for advocating modesty and abstinence, and for struggling against feminine charms and sexual attraction.[35] Being in search of a woman who was not a prostitute, Secundus was, quite simply, more credible when depicted as an adept of this school.

The same holds true for Secundus' inclusion among the Pythagoreans, which is perhaps founded solely on the basis of the overall topic of the work, namely the obligation to silence. This is indeed a Pythagorean feature, but something which the author, as Perry has already remarked, misunderstood.[36] Pythagoreans strictly observed their vow of silence over many years, but it was still a temporary state for them, exclusively serving an ascetic purpose and is also probably best understood as an obligation to secrecy, as usual in mystery religions and in similar intellectual and philosophical movements.[37]

33 On the structure, see Philonenko, "Les oxymores".
34 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 68.2; 68.7.
35 On which see Overwien, *Die Sprüche*, pp. 278–90.
36 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 7–10.
37 See Ch. Riedweg, *Pythagoras*, München 2002, pp. 132ff.

Quite clearly, a fundamental dilemma for the author emerged: he wanted to instruct as well as to entertain. On the one hand, in the second part of the biography, the reader is given a philosophical doctrine with a cohesive worldview. On the other hand, this doctrine is wrapped in literary clothes, which, at times, even affects the philosophical orientation of the work. The most prominent example of this is Secundus' silence, which is the central element of the literary depiction, yet in no way exhibits any connection with his teachings; it is not clear on which of the five aforementioned basic topics his silence should be based. Thus, we must state that the unknown author, at least on this point, did not succeed in harmonizing both of his aims that is to instruct and to entertain.

That is unfortunate, as the author of the *VS* clearly wanted to reach a wide readership.[38] The biographical passages were constructed in such a way that they appealed to the reader's emotions: forbidden love, suicide (Scene 1), fortitude to the point of death, death threats, and victory over the emperor (Scene 2). Moreover, the philosophical doctrine was presented in readily understandable, memorable gnomes, which could not be ascribed to any particular philosophical school. Additionally, the author was eager to compose a work which would match the prevailing taste of the period; Secundus' philosophical views are, indeed, typical of authors of the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, such as Celsus or Lucian. Also, the *Vita* is composed of completely different literary features which were widespread, and therefore popular, at this time (e.g. Plutarch, and the *Acta Alexandrinoroum*).[39]

To what extent the author of the *VS* was successful can only be approximately determined. The fact that Greek papyrus fragments from the 3rd and 6th–7th centuries AD, as well as Armenian and Syriac translations from the 6th–7th centuries AD have survived, suggests that the biography enjoyed a wide circulation quite early on, even beyond the Latin-Greek linguistic area. On the other hand we must admit that, at least in the western tradition, only a few further witnesses exist.

Pride of place here would be the so-called *Altercatio Hadriani et Epicteti*, a Latin question-and-answer dialogue between the Emperor Hadrian and the Stoic Epictetus, which certainly used the *VS* as a model. It is possible that this

38 See also Gallo, "Biografie", p. 247, and Hansen, *Anthology*, who classifies the *VS* as "popular literature".

39 See Hägg, *The Art*, pp. 303–304, and in summary Overwien, "Secundus", pp. 114–29.

work was already written in the 3rd century AD, but it may have been sometime later.[40]

An anonymous *passio* of the martyr Pansophios, probably originating from Alexandria, provides further testimony for the *VS*. The lost original perhaps came into existence in the 6th–7th centuries AD, yet it survives only in a Georgian translation, which in turn appears to be based on an Arabic *Vorlage*. Pansophios lived as a hermit in the desert, yet he was betrayed and brought before an official of the Emperor Decius, Augustalios. The latter asked him where he came from, but Pansophios remained silent. Whereupon Augustalios remarked: "I believe that you learned your wisdom from Secundus. You imitate him and thus say nothing." Then he repeated his question, and Pansophios began to talk.[41] This passage is notable evidence that Secundus' steadfastness and dogged silence could readily be understood by Christians as a peculiar form of martyrdom. And since in this episode no further details about Secundus are given, we can infer that the *VS* must have been rather famous by this period.[42]

The *VS*, however, did not only serve as a model for other works, but parts of it at least also found their way into *gnomologia* from the Byzantine period. Secundus' definition of women,[43] for instance, is found in a collection of sayings known as the *Gnomologium Byzantinum* or *DEI*. This anonymous collection is arranged by subject, and perhaps served as a school textbook. The *terminus ante quem* for its composition is provided by the *Corpus Parisinum* (8th–9th centuries AD), whose compiler incorporated excerpts from the *Gnomologium*. An earlier date for its existence is however very likely.[44] Via

40 In favour of this early date is Daly, *The Altercatio*, pp. 75–77. Löfstedt, "Zur Datierung", thinks the 5th century AD to be more probable, on account of its grammatical idiosyncrasies.

41 On this, see Peeters, "La passion", pp. 307–37, esp. pp. 308; 319–21. The text of the quoted passage reads (in the Latin translation of the Georgian version) as follows: *mea sententia, sapientiam hanc a Secundo didicisti: hunc tu imitaris ideoque nihil dicis …* On this topic see also De Nicola, "Secundi sententia", p. 483.

42 Whether the author of the *Vita* of Saint Alexios referred to the *VS* (according to Herrmann, "Secundus") is doubtful. The chastity of saints is a typical Christian topos. Additionally, Alexios does not as a rule refuse to speak, but rather only refuses to reveal his origins. See as well Gallo, "Frammento", p. 406 n. 38. On the life of Alexios, which only appears from the end of the 10th cent., yet is certainly from an earlier period, see Engels, "The West European", pp. 93–100.

43 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 84.3–10.

44 For the date and purpose of the *Gnomologium Byzantinum* see Gerlach, *Gnomica Democritea*, pp. 83; 573. Strictly speaking the situation is more complicated. The aphorism of Secundus is found only in the codex Baroccianus Gr. 50 (see Bywater, *Gnomologium*

the *Corpus Parisinum* and the *Loci Communes* of Maximus the Confessor, Secundus' definition of women entered many further Byzantine sacro-profane *gnomologia*.[45]

It is certainly no surprise that Secundus' definition of women is misogynistic. Misoginy was an extremely widespread topic in ancient and Byzantine *gnomologia* as they served as a repository for the *literati*, who readily fell back on maxims of this kind. Secundus, moreover, appeared as a representative of a misogynistic attitude *par excellence* due to the incident with his mother, and even more so through his memorable answers concerning women. He enjoyed great popularity in this regard,[46] particularly among western authors of the medieval period, but a pseudepigraphon from the Late Byzantine period can also illustrates this. A work of the church functionary John Pediasimos (13th–14th centuries) on the wicked woman, found in a Turin manuscript from the 15th century, was written under the *nom de plume* Secundus![47]

Baroccianum, p. 30, nr. 255). This codex offers a recension of this collection, which shows traces of revision, and was accordingly written later (see Gerlach, *Gnomica Democritea*, pp. 128–29). However, it cannot be ruled out, that the underlying chapter "On Women" already belonged to the original contents of the *DEI* (ibid., pp. 142; 175–76).

45 See *The Corpus Parisinum. A Critical Edition of the Greek Text with Commentary and English Translation, Book 1*, ed. D.M. Searby, Lewiston u.a. 2007, p. 349, nr. 95, and *Ps.-Maximus Confessor, erste kritische Edition einer Redaktion des sacro-profanen Florilegiums Loci Communes*, ed. S. Ihm (Palingenesia 73), Stuttgart 2001, p. 1004, Nr. 68.24 / 39.22. For further Byzantine collections which entail Secundus' definition of women, see the index of parallel passages in *Ps.-Maximus Confessor* (ibid., p. 1004) as well as Sternbach, "Gnomologium Parisinum", p. 157, nr. 222 and Tartaglia, "Sentenze e aneddoti", p. 67, Nr. 267. The so-called *Appendix Gnomica*, in which the aphorism is also found (see Sternbach, "Appendix Gnomica", p. 43, Nr. 96), instead belongs to the tradition of the *Wiener Apophthegmensammlung*. Its date of composition is however unknown (see Overwien, "Die Sprüche", pp. 50–51). In the *Corpus Parisinum* and *Loci Communes*, a further saying following Secundus' definition of women is introduced with ὁ αὐτὸς ἔφη ("He himself said"). This saying has nothing to do with Secundus, because it does not appear in the *VS* and has a different structure, as it offers no definition (of women) at all.

46 See the various articles of Lage Cotos, "Secundus", "La recepción" and "Una cadena".

47 See de Nicola, "Secundi sententia", p. 489. The text was edited by M.L. Agati, "Pediasimi, Carmen de utroque genere foeminarum", Bollettino dei classici, ser. 3, 6, 1985, pp. 86–106. On John Pediasimos see Krumbacher, *Geschichte*, pp. 556–58. A further possible witness for the *Nachleben* of Secundus from the Late Byzantine period is mentioned in Gallo, "Frammento di Vita", pp. 404–06.

B The Syriac Tradition

From the late 5th century AD onwards, Greek texts were largely translated by Christian intellectuals into Syriac. Foremost among them were theological, philosophical (mainly Aristotelian) works, but texts on popular philosophy also attracted great interest.[48] The VS was part of this translation process, and it can be detected within the Syriac tradition in different forms and contexts.

Codex BM Add. 14620 (9th century) contains various texts of Greek authors in Syriac. The first one is the VS. However, the biography does not appear in its complete form, since the text begins in the middle of Secundus' encounter with Hadrian, and a large part of the end, including question and answer nos. 1–19, is also missing.[49] The manuscript does not provide any information either about the Syriac translator nor the date of composition.

A second, this time indirect, witness is found in a homily of Isaac of Niniveh. The Nestorian churchman was for a short time, in the 7th century, bishop of his native city, but spent most of his life as a hermit and monk in the southwest of what is now Iran.[50] In his treatise, Isaac writes, among other matters, that one must unwaveringly confront the difficulties of this world. He cites here the example of a philosopher who was so internally steadfast, that not even the threats of the Greek king could move him to break his silence.[51] Even though the name of the philosopher is not mentioned here, it is obvious that this paraphrase is based on the VS.[52]

A further evidence for the existence of a Syriac Secundus, is a monastic anthology in *codex Sinai Syr. 14*, which presumably originated in the 10th century. It contains, along with Christian texts, some of pagan content, among them a short paraphrase of the VS.[53] A comparison with the above homily of Isaac reveals certain shared linguistic features. Additionally, in both cases, only the part of the VS in which Secundus proves himself to be steadfast before the emperor, is extant. Lastly, since both within the Sinai codex and in the homily

48 See the overview in Endress, "Die wissenschaftliche Literatur", Bd. II, pp. 407–12. On the spread of texts of popular philosophy, see Brock, "Syriac translation".

49 Syriac Text in Sachau, *Inedita Syriaca*, pp. 84–88. Translation in *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 104–07, and Brock, "Secundus", pp. 97–100. On the codex see Wright, *Catalogue*, pp. 800b-03a.

50 On the life and work of Isaac of Niniveh, see Bruns, "Isaak", and Bettiolo, "Syriac literature", pp. 482–83.

51 Text in *Mar Isaacus Ninivita De perfectione religiosa*, ed. P. Bedjan, Paris, Leipzig 1909, pp. 403.18–404.19; English translation in Wensinck, *Mystic treatises*, p. 271.

52 On this paraphrase, see Brock, "Secundus", pp. 94–97.

53 Text and translation in Brock, "Stomathalassa", pp. 46–47.

of Isaac, in immediate proximity of the *VS'* paraphrase, a philosopher is mentioned who lives naked in the wilderness and defends this way of life before Alexander the Great (here the Brahmin Dandamis is probably meant), it can be deduced that both texts are based on a common source.[54] This may not necessarily be the *VS* itself, it could also have been a summary in which the steadfastness of Secundus in particular was emphasized, something which Christian authors could have used as an example in their own writings.

Probably at the beginning of the 7th century, in the northern part of present-day Iraq, the legend of the Sassanid prince Mar Qardagh was written down. Part of it is a meeting between the prince and the martyr Abdišo, which is clearly based on the *VS*.[55] The martyr reproaches the prince for adhering to a false religion, the latter becomes extremely indignant over this, has him beaten, and orders him to say why he had made these accusations. Abdišo however remains silent and unmoved, even by threats that he would be killed. Only as Mar Qardagh grasps this and calms down do they finally have a conversation about God and creation.[56] Even though the *VS* is not explicitly mentioned, the parallels are obvious. Particularly revealing in this respect is Abdišo's statement that Mar Qardagh has power over his body, but not over his soul. Secundus resists Hadrian with similar words.[57]

All this leads to the conclusion that Syriac Christians, just like their Greek and Latin forerunners (see above, pp. 348–50), viewed Secundus as a model for steadfast conduct in the face of worldly power.

In addition to theological and hagiographic writing, Secundus is also mentioned by later Syriac historians. The earliest evidence is the *Chronicle* of the Patriarch by the Syrian Orthodox Church, Michael the Syrian (died 1199), where we read that during the reign of Hadrian there was a silent philosopher by the name of Secundus, whom the emperor in vain attempted to make speak.[58] Here only a small excerpt from the *VS* is presented, and it seems quite likely that it was only included in order to characterize the time and personality of Hadrian. Since Secundus was also mentioned by the Arab historian al-Masʿūdī for presumably the same reason (see below, pp. 355–56), we can assume that Michael did not take excerpts from the Syriac translation of the *VS* and integrate them

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54 See Brock, "Stomathalassa", p. 47.

55 Walker, *The Legend*, pp. 1; 27 (with n. 39).

56 Syriac text in *Die Geschichte des Mâr ʿAbhdīšōʿ und seines Jüngers Mâr Qardagh*, ed. H. Feige, Kiel 1890, pp. 8r1–10r1.

57 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 74.18–20.

58 Syriac text in *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche* (1166–1199), ed. par J.-B. Chabot, t. 4, Paris 1910, p. 105c, 25–30; French translation in t. 1 of this work, Paris 1899, p. 175a.

into his history, but rather had the same historical source at his disposal that al-Masʿūdī also had, in which Secundus was already mentioned.[59]

The *Chronicon Syriacum* of the head (*maphrian*) by the Jacobite Church, Bar Hebraeus (1225/6–1286), offers us a further witness. This work was composed in Syriac in order to stir the interest of contemporary Christians in their own culture and history, and at the same time strengthen their religious community in a Muslim-dominated milieu.[60] It contains a section on the Roman emperors, in which three scholars from the time of Hadrian are mentioned: the astronomer Ptolemy, the doctor Galen of Pergamon and Secundus, the Silent Philosopher.[61] The wording of the entry on Secundus agrees almost verbatim with Patriarch Michael's account. Furthermore, since in both works the Jewish rebellion of Bar Kochba is mentioned directly after this entry, we can assume that Bar Hebraeus here used Michael's *Chronicle* as a source.[62]

C The Arabic Tradition

The survival of ancient learning played an even greater role in the Arabic than in the Syriac tradition. The first translations of Greek works go back as far as the 8th century AD. However, it was not until the 9th century, that scientific and philosophical texts were systematically rendered into Arabic.[63] At this time the first Arabic versions of the *VS* also seem to have been made.[64]

59 On Michael's sources, see Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing", pp. 15–16.

60 See Todt, "Die syrische", pp. 60–62.

61 Syriac text in *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicum Syriacum*, ed. P. Bedjan, Paris 1890, pp. 52.21–23.

62 A marginal gloss appears to originate from Syriac historiography, perhaps even directly from Bar Hebraeus himself, in which it is stated that Secundus and Justin Martyr lived in Hadrian's time. It is found in two late manuscripts which contain an Arabic translation of a Greek chronicle from the 5th–6th centuries AD. See Gero, "Galen", pp. 383–87.

63 See Endress, "Die Wissenschaftliche Literatur", Bd. III, pp. 24–152, and Gutas, *Greek Thought*.

64 There are two additions (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, App. III, pp. 21.7–26.10; 51.13–53.14) in the Arabic translations, which appear to have been taken from a work of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (died *ca.* 756) and from the Arabic version of the *Book of Sindbad*. They preclude a translation of the *VS* before the 9th century (see *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 62). The earliest evidence for the Arabic *VS* is, according to the current state of research, the *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* (*Cabinet of Wisdom*) tradition, which stems from the beginning of the 11th cent (see below, p. 356). It is, however, not correct to regard the historical work of al-Masʿūdī, in which Secundus is briefly mentioned, as a *terminus ante quem* (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 62), since the histo-

The point of departure for the Arabic tradition of the *VS* was the translation or, more precisely translations, of the work. Little is known about where and by whom such translations were made, nor can be ascertained whether they were based on Syriac or Greek exemplars. Nevertheless, as already implied above (p. 342), we can assume that the translators in general rendered the texts verbatim, although one has occasionally to accept the possibility that at least some of them were reworkings.[65] However, the clearly Christian interpolations, such as Hadrian's questions about heaven and hell,[66] need not necessarily originate within the Arabic tradition, they could also have their roots in a christianized Greek or Syriac exemplar.

As we have already seen with the edition of the Greek text, Perry's edition of the Arabic translation is also highly problematic. Perry himself named five Arabic manuscripts from the 15th–17th centuries that were available to him, the *codices Parisini BN 49; 150; 275; 309* as well as the *codex Bodleianus 55*. However, even at that time more were known to exist.[67] In addition, Perry assumed that these manuscripts, as well as the Ethiopic and Old French translations which went back via a Latin intermediate to a (no longer extant) Arabic exemplar, were based on the same archetype.[68] Against this background, it is quite surprising that the edited text is just a simple transcription of the Arabic manuscript *Paris BN 150*, and that the variants of the further four manuscripts are relegated to an attached appendix, while the Ethiopic and Old French translations are not taken into account at all.[69] In addition, we learn nothing about the dependent relationships among the manuscripts, nor is it explained why Perry only used this one manuscript as a base text for his edition. While

rian probably drew his information not from the *VS* but rather from a historical source (see below, pp. 355–56).

65 Yet, even textual interpolations in the *VS* can prove the faithfulness of the translator to the original text. A passage from the *Book of Sindbad* (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, Appendix III, pp. 21.7–26.10) was for example inserted at the end of Scene 2 (see above, p. 340 and note 6). It seems that the translator wanted to make this addition recognizable without altering the original text.

66 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, App. III, pp. 36.9–37.7.

67 Perry himself named three codices which had been mentioned in other publications (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 60 n. 85). Additionally the manuscript collection of the Bibliothèque nationale contains at least one further exemplar, namely the *codex Paris BN 310* from the 17th century. See Troupeau, *Catalogue*, p. 272.

68 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 59–62.

69 See *Secundus*, ed. Perry, Appendix, pp. 3–54 (text); pp. 55–74 (variants), pp. 119–156 (English translation). A French translation is offered by Revillout, *Vie et sentences*, passim. On the *codex Parisinus BN 150* see Troupeau, *Catalogue*, pp. 116–18.

the annotations to Perry's English translation of the Arabic version mention some important variants from other manuscripts, one gets no idea of the Arabic archetype. Additionally, it turns out that the versions of *codex Parisinus BN 150*, *codex Bodleianus 55* and the Ethiopic version, sometimes clearly differ from one another. This allows us to infer that there were different Arabic recensions.[70] The situation is further complicated by the fact that the transmitted Arabic recension contains doublets in some passages, which go back to different Greek templates, and in part even allow us to discern at least two Arabic translations. Hence, one can conclude that the version surviving in the Paris manuscript is the result of the combination of at least two Arabic translations. Furthermore, we must assume that one of the Arabic translators either combined various Greek exemplars in his work, or that his exemplar was already the result of contamination.[71] Once again, only a thorough investigation of all the Arabic manuscripts, including the additional Arabic versions mentioned below (see below, p. 357), would provide us with more clarity. The text as it is printed in Perry, instead, unfortunately gives us only an imperfect idea of the Arabic tradition and the working methods of the Arabic translators of the *VS*.[72]

The earliest author for whom knowledge of the Arabic *VS* can be ascertained is the Baghdad-born al-Masʿūdī (died 956 AD), who in his numerous writings was concerned above all with geography and history.[73] These interests also affected his work *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa-l-išrāf* (*The Book of Notification and Verification*), which he completed shortly before his death. There he offers, inter alia, an outline of Roman history, and accordingly comes to speak of the Emperor Hadrian, during whose reign Secundus lived. Al-Masʿūdī does not, however, elaborate upon this topic, since, as he writes, he had already discussed the relationship between the two in another work. Unfortunately this

70 Cf. also Dashian, "Das Leben", pp. 16–17.

71 On which see the perceptive observations of Frank, "Review", pp. 348a-49b. Thus, for example the answers of Secundus δωδεκάωρος ... ἀπότασις (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 80.5–6) were translated twice (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, App. III, p. 28.9–10; 11–13), while in the first passage ὑπόμνησις βιωτική was omitted. For the answers to the questions about the cosmos (ibid., p. 78.11–15), the Arabic translations even offer three versions (ibid., App. III, p. 27.8–28.8). Their differing word order clearly suggests different renderings.

72 Frank, "Review", p. 350b, is correct in his verdict in this respect, namely that the Arabic tradition must be once again completely re-edited and examined, since even the transcription of the individual Paris Codex contains numerous errors. See Frank, "Review", pp. 349b-50b, and the review of Mattock, p. 128.

73 On his person and work see Sezgin, *Geschichte*, Bd. 1, pp. 332–36.

text is not extant,[74] hence the question of its source must presently remain open. Since, however, a similar passage is found in some Syriac historians (see above, pp. 352–53), it seems plausible that al-Masʿūdī borrowed this part from another historical source.

By implication, the entry in al-Masʿūdī was not taken from an Arabic translation of the *VS* which, according to the current state of research, can first be noticed instead in collections of gnomic sayings (*gnomologia*). This kind of reception is explained by the great popularity which Greek ethics enjoyed, particularly in the Arabic tradition.[75] Pride of place belongs to the huge *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*-tradition (*Cabinet of Wisdom*-tradition), a compendium containing biographical notices and maxims of Greek and Arabic sages. The original version was probably composed at the beginning of the 11th century.

Whether the Baghdad philosopher Abū Sulaymān al-Siǧistānī is the author, as some Arabic sources claim, seems rather unlikely.[76] Only later recensions have survived from this original, among which the version called *Muntaḫab Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* (*Selection of the Cabinet of Wisdom*) (12th–13th centuries) is of interest to us here.[77] In this collection, two minor parts of the *VS* are spread over two different entries. The first is titled "Arūn al-malik", which is probably to be understood as a misreading for "Hadrian, the King." It includes only the questions on the true meaning of friendship.[78] Shortly afterwards we are confronted with a further entry "Secundus", which contains a brief summary of the scene in which Hadrian attempts to make the philosopher speak.[79] This second entry is also found almost verbatim in Šams al-Dīn al-Šahrazūrī's *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ wa-rawḍat al-afrāḥ* (*Comfort of Souls and Garden of Delights*), a com-

74 Text in *Kitāb at-tanbīh wa'l-ischrāf auctore al-Masūdī*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden 1894, p. 128.14–16. A French translation of this passage can be found in Vaux, *Maçoudi*, p. 180.

75 On the importance of Greek ethics in the Near East see Endress, "Die wissenschaftliche Literatur", Bd. III, p. 37: "Hellenistische Ethik … hat in der arabischen Literatur breitere Wirkung entfaltet als irgendein anderer Zweig des alten Erbes".

76 See Gutas, "The Ṣiwān al-ḥikma Cycle", and Daiber, "Der Ṣiwān al-ḥikma".

77 The second largest recension *Muḫtaṣar Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* (*Summary of the Cabinet of Wisdom*) in contrast does not contain the entry "Secundus". Cf. the table of contents in *The Mukhtaṣar Ṣiwān al-hikma of Umar b. Sahlān al-Sāwī*, ed. R.M. Kartanegara, vol. 1, Chicago 1996, pp. 60–62.

78 Text in *The Muntakhab*, ed. Dunlop, p. 94, l. 1996–97.

79 Text in *The Muntakhab*, ed. Dunlop, p. 101, l. 2160–65; English translation in *Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 20 n. 29.

pendium directly based on the *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*-tradition, which he probably composed in the second half of the 13th century.[80]

A further witness for the Arabic VS is found in Ibn Hindū's (died 1019/1029) comprehensive anthology *al-Kalim al-ruhāniyya fī l-ḥikam al-yūnāniyya* (*The Spiritual Sayings, Greek Maxims*), which contains hundreds of maxims of Greek thinkers.[81] In this collection we also read, under the lemma "Maxims of Secundus the Silent", about Secundus' encounter with Hadrian, followed by a selection of 17 of the questions and answers which Ibn Hindū obviously had at his disposal. In comparing these 17 entries with those of the Paris manuscript printed in Perry's edition, one immediately notices some conspicuous features. First, the version of Ibn Hindū affords answers which are indeed to be found in the Greek tradition but not in the version of the Paris manuscript. Furthermore, the type and sequence of the questions do not fully coincide, and differences in wording can be detected as well.[82] Since the compilers of Arabic collections generally reproduced the text almost verbatim,[83] we can infer that Ibn Hindū uncovers parts of an Arabic translation based on an otherwise non-extant Greek exemplar. How this version relates to that preserved in the *codex Paris BN 150*, or to the aforementioned extract from the *Muntaḫab Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*, however, is impossible to ascertain.[84]

The early Arabic works on alchemy are based to a great extent on Greek sources. Accordingly, many treatises on this topic were ascribed to Greek think-

80 See E. Cottrell, "Šams al-Dīn al-Šahrazūrī", pp. 227–28. The text can be found in *Nuzhatu'l-arwāh wa Rawdatu'l afrāh fī Tārīkhi'l Hukama by Shamsuddin Muḥammad Bin Mahmood al-Shahrazūri*, ed. by S. Kh. Aḥmed, vol. II, Hyderabad 1976, pp. 307–08.

81 See the text in *Ibn Hindū*, ed. *Ḫalīfāt*, pp. 442.7–446.5; an English translation is offered in *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 157–60. On Ibn Hindū's life see Ferrari, "Ein Brückenschlag".

82 For the additional answers in Ibn Hindū see *Secundus*, ed. Perry, pp. 158–59. In Ibn Hindū, Hadrian's questions are about the friend (*Ibn Hindū*, ed. Ḫalīfāt, p. 445.3), in the Paris codex about friendship (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, App. III, p. 44.7). In Ibn Hindū, questions about God and the cosmos or wealth and beauty are asked in a different order from that of the Paris codex (*Ibn Hindū*, ed. Ḫalīfāt, pp. 443.2–4; 445.5–7; *Secundus*, ed. Perry, App. III, pp. 27.2–28.8; 43.4–9, 44.2–6). In Ibn Hindū, old age is translated with *haramun* (*Ibn Hindū*, ed. Ḫalīfāt, p. 446.1), in the Paris codex with *šayḫūḫatun* (Secundus, ed. Perry, App. III, p. 48.1).

83 See Overwien, "Die Sprüche", p. 173.

84 B.E. Perry (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 160 n. 74) assumes that the versions from Ibn Hindū and from the *Muntaḫab Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* go back to the same exemplar, since they have certain passages in common. However, the situation appears much more complicated than Perry would have us believe. In the *Muntaḫab*, questions are not asked about the friend, but on the true meaning of friendship (*The Muntakhab*, ed. Dunlop, p. 94, l. 1997). Additionally, both the answers and the description of the Hadrian scene do not match in all respects.

ers, among whom Secundus, remarkably, is occasionally found.[85] Secundus is mentioned in Ibn an-Nadīm's (died 995/998) *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (*The Catalogue*) as an author of alchemical treatises, one of which is addressed to the Emperor Hadrian. Obviously, only the scene with Hadrian was retained, yet the plot was reshaped in order to fit the scientific topic.[86] A further work of Secundus "*On Dreams in the Art* (*of Alchemy*)" is also mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Fihrist*. To what degree it is identical to a *Risāla* (*Letter*), also ascribed to Secundus, which is cited by multiple authors in various manuscripts, remains to be seen.[87] Finally, it should be noted that the name of Secundus is found in a list of alchemical authors which the Umayyad Caliph Ḫālid ibn Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya (died 683) is said to have authored.[88] It is however unclear as to whether this list is a forgery.

Even if Secundus still played a minor role as an author of alchemical treatises compared to other Greek philosophers, his presence alone in this field, alongside persons such as Socrates or Plato, demonstrates at least that he was so well-known as to be deemed worthy of spreading wisdom of this sort. Whether we are dealing here with a Late Antique Greek or Near Eastern development, though, stills needs clarification.[89]

D From Pagan Philosopher to Christian Saint

This overview has hopefully demonstrated that Secundus' afterlife in Antiquity, Late Antiquity and in the Near Eastern Middle Ages, encompassed quite different kinds of literature: translation, hagiography, historiography, gnomologies and alchemy. One aspect however stands out, since it is discernable in all epochs, and constitutes, as it were, a specific feature of the *VS* reception. Although the work is fully a work of the pagan world and entirely devoid of

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85 See Endress, "Die wissenschaftliche Literatur", Bd. III, pp. 143–47. On Secundus as an alchemist, see Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, pp. 164–65.

86 Text in *Ibn an-Nadīm*, ed. Flügel, p. 353.25; 354.19–20. See Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, pp. 164–65.

87 See *Ibn an-Nadīm*, ed. Flügel, p. 354.27; cf. Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, p. 165.

88 See Ruska, "Chālid ibn Jazīd", nr. 61. Ḫālid ibn Yazīd himself is often mentioned as an author of alchemical treatises. See Sezgin, *Geschichte*, Bd. 4, pp. 120–26.

89 Nothing further shall be said here of Perry's (*Secundus*, ed. Perry, p. 1 n.1) hypothesis that the *VS* also influenced a single tale of the *1001 Nights*. Already Cerulli, "Review", pp. 218–19, noted that the parallels cited are widespread topoi, which in no way necessitate a direct dependence. See as well Gallo, "Frammento", p. 404.

Christian elements, it still found great appeal in a Christian context, albeit in a much reduced form. As a matter of fact, only a few elements of its multi-faceted literary refinement and quite multiform philosophical doctrine were retained, namely the ones that could be easily reinterpreted or reapplied in a new Christian context. These elements include, above all, Secundus' conduct toward women, which was compatible with the ideals of Christian asceticism and self-control, as well as his steadfastness in the face of secular or tyrannical power, which mirrored the behavior of Christian martyrs. In both cases, the hero was tempted and yet was able to resist and remain true to his 'doctrine'. When reduced to these elements, the *VS* could easily function as a model for saints' lives and accounts of the sufferings of Christian martyrs, and thus as an example for Christian conduct, in the West as well as the East.[90]

The same claim can also be made, in a way, for the gnomological collections. While the aforementioned Greek and Arabic collections do not display any traces of a decidedly Christian influenced reworking in their presentation of the *VS*, this lacuna was filled by some Christian authors. Thus, questions of a genuinely Christian theological nature have survived in the Arabic as well as Ethiopic tradition. And even though their origin is at present unclear, they similarly substantiate Secundus' transformation into a model of Christian behavior.[91]

It must, however, be emphasized that the picture of Secundus sketched here is, and has to remain, a preliminary one. It will be a pressing task for future scholarship to closely analyse all (!) the surviving textual witnesses, attempting first to work out how many versions of the *VS* do exist, how they relate to one another, and whether it is possible to filter out an *Urtext*. Such an examination alone, laborious thought it may be, would allow for new insights on the work. A systematic screening of the Near Eastern sources for further references to Secundus would be just as fruitful. It would not seem far-fetched to assume that many other Greek, Latin and Syrian saints' lives were based on the model of the *VS*. In this way, more new evidence for Secundus' afterlife will come to light, thus aiding us in rightly evaluating the impact the *VS* once had in Antiquity and in the (Near Eastern) Middle Ages.

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90 In the Ethiopic version of the *VS*, the polarization of pagan philosopher vs Christian saint was even removed, since one can read at the beginning that Secundus' parents converted to Christianity. See *Secundi Philosophi Taciturni Vita ac Sententiae sec. codicem Aethiopicum* … instr. J. Bachmann, Berlin 1887, p. 71: *iique cognoverant Christum*.

91 See Dashian, "Das Leben", p. 16.

Post-scriptum: As Dr. U. Pietruschka told me, the oriental versions of the *Vita Secundi* have been edited and translated into German by M. Heide, *Secundus Taciturnus. Die arabischen, äthiopischen und syrischen Textzeugen einer didaktischen Novelle aus der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Äthiopistische Forschungen, 81), Wiesbaden 2014. Unfortunately, it was no longer possible to take this edition into accout.

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CHAPTER 14

Fighting with Tales: 1 The Arabic *Book of Sindbad the Philosopher*

Bettina Krönung

1 The Eastern Origin

The Book of Sindbad the Philosopher (henceforth *BSP*), also known under the title of *The Seven Viziers*, tells the story of a prince who is led by his teacher's astronomical calculations into keeping a seven-day oath of silence. Bound by his promise to do so, the prince cannot defend himself when false accusations of rape are made against him by one of the king's wives, and when, as a result, his father sentences him to death. The king's seven viziers know that the king will later regret his rash judgement on the prince, and so they use their storytelling skills to change their master's mind. In the course of the ensuing week, one wise man a day tells one or two stories in order to persuade the king both of the wiliness of his wife, and of the innocence of his son. Meanwhile, the king's wife tries to reverse the effect of these counsels by responding with daily stories of her own. When the time of the prince's silence passes, he speaks at last, and convinces his father of his innocence, while the wife confesses her guilt.

This, in brief, is the main storyline as found in numerous early versions of the *BSP*. What is more, the overarching frame-story includes several further features that all early versions share, such as the opening motif of a childless king whose prayers for a son are realised, but at a price: the king also receives a prophesy that his heir is destined to undergo a life-threatening danger (the Command of Seven-day Silence). Subsequently, the king's son is tutored for many years, but without learning anything. Eventually, Sindbad the Wise enters into a contract with the king whereby Sindbad commits himself to teaching the prince within six months everything that the young man has failed to learn across his many preceding years of schooling. Sindbad then keeps his promise. In good time, he equips the prince with the kind of knowledge that should make him the wisest in his father's kingdom. However, only a day before the prince's education comes to an end, Sindbad makes his student promise to keep silence for seven days.

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2 The Versions of the Eastern Group of the *BSP*

G: The Byzantine *Syntipas* of Michael Andreopoulos
Syr: The Syriac *Sindban*
P1: The Persian *Sindbād-nāma* of az-Zahīrī as-Samarqandī
P2: An anonymous Persian versified version of the *Sindbād-Nāma*
P3: The Persian *Sindbād-nāma* in the *eigth night* of Nachshabis *Tutinameh*
A: The Arabic book of *The Seven Viziers* in the MS 2743 of the Şehid Ali Paşa Library Istanbul
A1001: Later Arabic versions of *The Seven Viziers*, included in the *One Thousand and One Nights* or transmitted as self-standing texts
A101: The Arabic version of *The Seven Viziers* in the *One Hundred and One Nights*
Sp: The Old Spanish *Libro de los Enganos*
H: The Hebrew *Mischlè Sandabar*

When considering the question of the origins of this Sindbad material, a distinction must be drawn between what we can learn from the texts that happen to have survived, and what knowledge about their origin we can derive from secondary sources. Among the surviving texts we find a group of fairly diverse versions and redactions that can be traced more or less directly to the original stock material of the Sindbad-Story, though without necessarily including the original text of the book. These texts are sometimes referred to as the 'Eastern' or 'Oriental group' on account of the Indian, or rather the Persian-Arabic origin of their source material.[1] Derived from this group are all later versions written in various languages of the western Middle Ages, such as, for example, *The Seven Sages of Rome* or *the Dolopathos*. Since these form a distinct group that is significantly different from the versions of the Eastern group, modern scholarship describes them with a collective term, the 'Western group'.[2]

To the Eastern group belongs, first of all, the Byzantine *Syntipas* (**G**),[3] which, according to its prologue, was translated from Syriac into Greek in the late 11th century by Michael Andreopoulos. The Syriac source of the Byzantine translation has been preserved by indirect transmission in a 16th-century fragmentary

1 S. Comparetti, *Researches*, p. 1; Perry, "Origin", p. 58; Belcher, "Diffusion", p. 34; Ott, "Sieben weise Meister", col. 1837; De Blois, "Sindbād", p. 723.

2 For further secondary literature on the versions of the so-called Western Group, see: Runte, *The Seven Sages*; Lundt, "Sieben weise Meister", pp. 656–60; Marzolph, "Sindbâd", p. 704; Mallette, "Seven Sages"; Foehr-Janssens, "De Jérusalem à Rome".

3 On Byzantine *Syntipas*, see the chapter by I. Toth in this volume.

manuscript.[4] On the basis of his collation of the extant Greek and Syriac texts, Nöldeke observed that Andreopoulos's version represented a faithful translation of its Syriac exemplar, although it is not word-for-word. Though it survives incomplete, the extant Syriac manuscript is highly likely to have followed closely the very same exemplar.[5] Since the direct Arabic or Persian source of the Syriac text has not survived, Andreopoulos's translation represents the oldest fully-preserved version we have of the *BSP*. Beside the Syriac and Greek, there also survive a Persian prose version, dating back to 1160, entitled *Sindbād-nāma* by az-Zahīrī as-Samarqandī (**P1**), and a 14th-century Persian redaction in verse, perhaps stemming from the 12th-century tradition (**P2**). There is, furthermore, a fragmentary Persian recension, also presumably derived from **P1,** and transmitted in the *Eighth Night* of Nachshabis *Tutinameh* (**P3**).[6] In addition to these, there survive various Arabic versions, as well as those that stem from one or another early Arabic version. Within this group, the Arabic version found in MS 2743 from the Şehid Ali Paşa Library in Istanbul **(A)**, dated to 1533, represents one of the most ancient texts, although probably not the oldest, as Perry suggested it was.[7] The Old Spanish version, entitled *Libro de los Enganos* (**Sp**), and dated to 1253, stems directly from an Arabic source, which in its main features is strikingly similar to **A.**[8] The Hebrew *Mischlè Sandabar* (**H**), most probably from the first half of the 13th century too, also has an Arabic text as its source.[9] Moreover, entire stories from the later revised Arabic versions were

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4 *Sindban oder die Sieben Weisen Meister,* ed. and German trans. F. Baethgen, Leipzig 1879.The Syriac version should be dated between the 9th and the 11th centuries. The former date is based on the mention of an earlier [Arabic] version by Mousos in **G** (see the contribution of I. Toth, n. 33, on Mousos see, below p. 370) and the latter on the emergence of **G**.

5 Nöldeke, "Review", p. 513. For further considerations on the relationship of **G** and the extant Syriac text to their presumed common, Syriac source, see I. Toth in this volume, pp. 394–95. with n. 45.

6 **P1**: az-Zahīrī as-Samarqandī, *Sindbād-n*ā*m*a, ed. Ateş; French trans. Bogdanović, *Le livre*. **P2**: English trans. W.A. Clouston, *The Book of Sindibad*, London 1884, also accessible online: <http://rbedrosian.com/Tales/Clouston_Sindibad.pdf>. **P3**: Ed. H. Brockhaus, *Nachschabi's Sieben Weisen Meister, Persisch und Deutsch*, Leipzig 1848. For the Persian versions and their mutual relationship, see Perry, *Origin*, p. 38, n. 76 and pp. 63–64.

7 Ed. Ateş, *Sindbād-nāma*, pp. 348–88. On this manuscript and its place in the transmission history of the *BSP* see: Perry, "Origin", pp. 61–62, and below, n. 29. However, Perry was not aware of the *BSP* from *One Hundred and One Nights*, which, the current contribution argues, is the most ancient extant Arabic version; see below, section 4.

8 Ed. D. Comparetti, Milano 1882, pp. 73–114 (Engl. trans. pp. 117–64), and J.E. Keller, *Libro de los Enganos*, Chapel Hill 1953. See Perry, "Origin", p. 62

9 M. Epstein, *Tales of Sendebar: An Edition and Translation of the Hebrew Version of the Seven Sages, Based on Unpublished Manuscripts*, Philadelphia 1967.

integrated into the *One Thousand and One Nights* under the title *The Seven Viziers* or were transmitted independently (all of these are summarised in the following section under the siglum of **A1001**).[10] A further version of the *BSP*, transmitted separately from all the other known Arabic recensions, can be found as part of the collection of stories *One Hundred and One Nights* **(A101).**[11]

3 The BSP: Origin and Textual Transmission

Many early Arabic and Persian authors testify to the *BSP*'s being of either Indian or Persian origin. The historians al-Ya'qūbī (9th century) and al-Mas'ūdī (10th century) argue in favour of an Indian provenance, while Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 961) advocates a Persian origin for the Sindbad-material. Ibn an-Nadīm in his *Fihrist* (composed ca. 988), was already pointing out inconsistency of opinion among the scholars of his time as to whether the *BSP* came from India or Persia. He himself, however, speaks in favour of an Indian origin.[12] The controversy regarding the origin of the Sindbad-material has been as contentious in modern times as it was in the 11th century. The influential Orientalist Theodore Benfey (1809–1881), for example, together with many scholars following in his footsteps, argued early on for the Indian origin of the *BSP*.[13] This argument was based on numerous investigations of the parallels between the *BSP* on the one hand, and various texts written in Sanskrit and Buddhistic sources on the other, although this did not lead to any identification of a complete Indian prototype.

Benfey's 'Indian theory' was for the first time challenged by Ben Edwin Perry, who was able to produce several conclusive arguments for the Persian

10 *1001 nigths*, ed. Bulaq 1836, III, pp. 75–124; trans. M. Habicht, Breslau 1840, XV, pp. 102–72, Burton VI, pp. 122f. (according to Comparetti, *Researches*, p. 7; Perry, "Origin", p. 62); *1001 nights* (Calcutta II), German trans. by E. Littmann, vol. IV, Wiesbaden 1953, pp. 259–368. Transmitted independently in a Bengalese manuscript, translated by J. Scott, Tales, *Anecdotes, and Letters*, Shrewsbury 1800 (repr. in Clouston, *The Book of Sindibad*, London 1848), see, also Belcher, "Diffusion", p. 35, n. 4h. A further two fragmentary and later Arabic manuscripts, now in Paris, have been edited by Basset, "Deux Manuscripts".

11 For more on this version, see below, section 4.

12 On these sources and the information they provide on the origin of the *BSP*, see Nöldeke "Review", p. 521; Perry, "Origin", pp. 2–6, 18–19 and 27–28; Belcher, "Diffusion", p. 36; De Blois, "*Sindbād*", p. 723.

13 A great deal of secondary literature on the proponents of the theory of the Indian origin of the *BSP* can be found in Perry, "Origin", pp. 37–55; Belcher, "Diffusion", pp. 37–39, n. 18–24, see also Upadhyaya, "Indic Background".

origin of the *BSP*.[14] In his essay, Perry rightly queried the trustworthiness of the evidence for an Indian provenance put forward by Arabic and Persian historians, as well as by Ibn an-Nadīm.[15] Above all, he demonstrated how diverse Hellenistic material, after initially being disseminated in Middle Persian literature, was subsequently integrated in one form or another into the *BSP*. In addition to pointing out the obvious parallels with the Biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife, Perry discussed close similarities between the *BSP* and both the Greek *Life of Secundus the Silent Philosopher* and *The book of Šimās*. The latter, known mainly from its presence in *One Thousand and One Nights*, probably goes back to the Syriac version of the *Book of Ahiqar*.[16] Belcher later supported Perry's theory with further examples from Persian literature. Discussing the evolution of the *BSP*, he attributed the greatest significance to oral transmission.[17]

In addition to being supported by all the arguments listed above, the middle Persian origin of the *BSP* can be gauged from additional information found in the versions **P1** and **G**. Thus, in the prologue to his *Sindbād-nāma*, az-Zahīrī states that the *BSP* was originally composed in Pehlevi (middle Persian), and that it was translated into Persian (that is, Dari) in 950/51.[18] In the Prologue of the Byzantine *Syntipas* there is a mention of a Persian Mousos, who composed the original story of *BSP*.[19] Although this is not explicitly stated in the Prologue, there is substantial evidence to suggest that an Arabic version of the *BSP* was a direct source for the Syriac text, which in turn originated from a middle Persian exemplar. Clues that this may have been the case can be found in numerous Arabisms that occur in the Syriac text,[20] as well as in references to the *BSP* in the 10th-century catalogue of Arabic literary works, *Fihrist*, by Ibn an-Nadīm, who lists a long and a short version of the book, and a further versified *BSP*

14 Perry, "Origin".

15 For Perry's argumentation, see ibid., pp. 2–6 and 18–20.

16 For the parallels, see ibid., pp. 8–27, 29–31, 51, 68 and 88–89. On *Vita Secundi*, see the contribution by O. Overwien in this volume pp. 338–64.

17 Belcher, "Diffusion", pp. 41–47. Already Comparetti, in *Researches*, p. 2 attributes the central role to orality concerning *BSP*. On orality see also the contributions by C. Cupane and P. Roilos in this volume pp. 479–94 and 463–78 respectively.

18 Az-Zahīrī, *Sindbād-nāma*, trans. Bogdanović, p. 24. On this passage, see also below, n. 27.

19 On the prologue of the Byzantine Syntipas see the contribution by I Toth in this volume, pp. 383–84.

20 Nöldeke, "Review", pp. 551–17.

penned by the Arabic poet Abān al-Lāḥiqī (d. 815).[21] All of this indicates that the Sindbad-material was known in Arabic literature at the latest by the 9th, though very probably already in the 8th century. Moreover, Ibn an-Nadīm transmits the name of the Persian scholar Mūsā b. ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī (d. 874/875), one of the leading translators from Persian into Arabic, who has been unanimously identified in modern scholarship as Mousos from Andreopoulos's Preface.[22] On the basis of this evidence, it is possible to assert that already in the 6th–7th centuries there existed a middle Persian *BSP*,[23] from which various translations and renditions stemmed, such as the Arabic versions by Abān al-Lāḥiqī and Mūsā b. ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī, and the Persian version mentioned by az-Zahīrī, these in turn serving as models from which later versions developed. However, it is not unreasonable also to assume that the lost middle Persian source may have been influenced by similar Indian narrative material. In fact, this kind of fusion fits neatly into the cultural context of Sassanid Persia, which is known to have been a melting pot of both Indian and Hellenistic literary material. The same context gave rise to the well-known *Kalīla wa-Dimna* from the pen of the Persian doctor Burzoe – the text to which an Indian provenance was attributed, and at whose core an Indian narrative, namely, *Pañcatantra*, can be found.[24]

4 Early Versions of the BSP and Their Mutual Relationship

In his seminal study of the *BSP*, Perry elucidated the relationships between various extant and attested versions of the Eastern group of this narrative. Perry's diagram, which has never been seriously questioned, is outlined in Figure 14.1.[25]

21 For the corresponding passages in *Fihrist* by Ibn an-Nadīm (with bibliography), see above, n. 12.

22 On Mūsā b. ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī as a possible author of the Arabic BSP, see Perry, "Origin", pp. 3 and 32–34; Belcher, "Diffusion", p. 36; Maltese, *Il libro*, p. 10.

23 The *BSP* must have in any case been composed after the appearance of the middle Persian prototype of the *k. Kalīla wa-Dimna*, from which it derives entire stories (thus after 578, the year of death of Chosrau Anuschirwan; on the dating of the middle Persian source of the Arabic k. *Kalīla wa-Dimna,* see, in this volume the chapter by B. Krönung). On the evidence for the dating of the middle Persian source to the 6th–7th centuries, see Perry, "Origin", pp. 92–94; De Blois, "Sindbād", p. 724.

24 On the close relationship between *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and *the Book of Sindbad*, see Perry, "Origin", pp. 3–6, 19–20 and 90–92. On *Pañcatantra* as a source for *Kalīla wa-Dimna* see, the chapter by B. Könung in this volume pp. 427–60.

25 The table is taken from Perry, "Origin", p. 64.

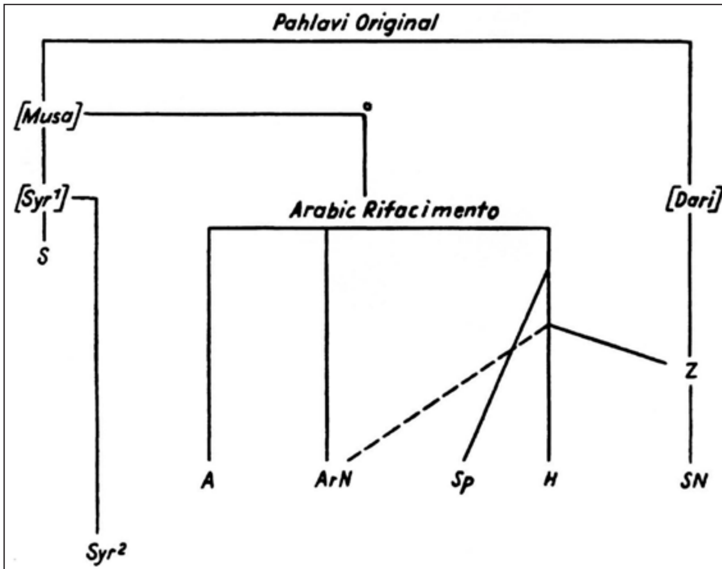

FIGURE 14.1 Book of Sindbad *diagram. Illustration taken from Perry, B.E., "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad",* Fabula *3 (1959), 1–94: p. 64, original note under diagram: °Assuming, what is uncertain, that Abān al-Lāḥiqī (d. 815) made an Arabic version based either directly or indirectly upon the Pahlavi, it is quite possible that his version, rather than Mūsā's, which would be later, was the principal source of the* Rifacimento.

Perry's findings as represented in his chart result from his analysis of the relationship between various versions of the *BSP* on the basis of a collation of their main frame-stories, rather than of the sub-stories found in the core narrative of the Book.[26] From this, Perry has drawn the conclusion that the middle Persian archetype generated two main strands of transmission of the *BSP*: one represented by the Syriac/Greek tradition, which can be traced back to the Arabic translation of the middle Persian text by Mūsā b. ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī, and the other, attested by **P1**–**P3** (or **Z**/**SN** according to Perry), that is linked to the middle Persian source through a now-lost version originally written in Persian (Dari-). However, De Blois has rightly pointed out that az-Zahīrī did not mention in his discussion of the middle Persian origins of the *BSP* whether he had indeed translated his *Sindbād-nāma* from Persian.[27] It is therefore possible that az-Zahīrī based his text on one, or several, Arabic versions that might have been readily available to him. In this way, az-Zahīrī's text might be seen as a

26 Ibid., pp. 66–84.

27 De Blois, "Sindbād", p. 723. On az-Zahīrīs passage, see above note 18.

further representative of the revision that Perry has defined as *Arabic Rifacimento.* Perry uses this term in reference to a group of Arabic versions that includes **Sp** and **H**, on the grounds that they represent subsequent direct or indirect reworkings either of Musas's or Abān al-Lāḥiqīs's Arabic translations from middle Persian. Perry's collation has also shown that **A** and **Sp** in some sense represent the link between **G/Syr** and later representatives of the *Arabic Rifacimento* (such as those found in the *One Thousand and One Nights*), and that they thus represent more reliable witnesses of the *Arabic Rifacimento* than other available texts in this group.[28]

5 The Place of the *BSP* in the *One Hundred and One Nights*

Another early version of the *BSP* can be found in the collection of stories in the *One Hundred and One Nights* under the title *The Story of the King's Son and of the Seven Viziers* (hereafter *The Seven Viziers*). This source has so far mostly been ignored in modern scholarship concerning the *BSP*.[29] On the basis of several samples of textual evidence, the present chapter will argue that this collection preserves one of the oldest versions of the *BSP*, and that it must therefore be taken into consideration in any future investigation of the history of the textual transmission of Sindbad material.

Unlike its world-wide famous 'older sister',[30] the *Thousand and One Nights*, the collection of stories that is known today as the *One Hundred and One Nights* (hereafter the OHON) long had only a shadowy existence outside the canon of Arabic literature, and remained, therefore, almost entirely unnoticed in scholarship.[31] This changed, however, when a remarkable ancient manuscript from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (no. 00513), datable to the first half of the 13th century, was discovered in 2010, and was translated by the Arabist Claudia Ott into German.[32] Although the OHON uses the same narrative device as its more elaborate counterpart, namely story-telling as the means of averting death, also known as the 'ransom motif',[33] it nonetheless incorporates its subordinate

28 On the proximity of **A/Sp** and **Syr/G,** see Perry, "Origin", pp. 61–62. See, also the table in the appendix.

29 This is also made evident by the fact, that this version does not appear in Perry's diagram.

30 As described by Ott, *101 Nacht*, pp. 245 and 252.

31 In the early Arabic book catalogues, such as *Fihrist* by Ibn an-Nadīm, the OHON is not mentioned. See ibid., p. 245; Marzolph/Chraïbi, "Hundred", pp. 303–04.

32 On the MS of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and on the other, later manuscripts of the OHON, see below notes 42 and 43.

33 S. Marzolph, "Ransom Motiv", pp. 687–88.

narrative units into a distinctly different frame-story, whose origin can be traced in Indian literature.[34] Moreover, only two of its eighteen stories can also be found in the *One Thousand and One Nights*: the *Ebony Horse* and the *Seven Viziers*.[35] As far as the story of the *Seven Viziers* is concerned, it is so significantly dissimilar in the two collections that the existence of two distinct versions of the same story can safely be assumed. This feature alone suggests that the two collections must have been transmitted independently of each other. This notion is further reinforced by the fact that no evidence of the transmission of the OHON, as it survives today, can be traced to the eastern part of the Islamic world. Unlike the *One Thousand and One Nights*, which was widely spread throughout the east, the OHON seems to have been confined to the 'Occident of Orient', to Northern Africa and Andalusia.[36] Not only are all surviving manuscripts of the OHON of Maghrebian or Andalusian origin,[37] but their content too indicates that the OHON was written within this geographical context.[38] The task of tracing the origin of the OHON is made particularly difficult by a complete silence on the matter in the sources, as well as the lack of any secure clues as to what date to ascribe to the emergence of this collection. However, it is possible to suggest that the version that survives today was put together around the year 900.[39] A great deal more could be said in support of Claudia Ott's claim that the Indian frame-story of the OHON had already been translated into Middle Persian in pre-Islamic times, and then circa 800 into Arabic, presumably in an already-amplified form.[40] Such a process of compiling stories finds its closest parallels in the formation history of other frame stories that originated in a middle-Persian context, by this means also receiving an Indian influence (e.g. *k. Kalīla wa-Dimna*, *k. Bilawhar wa-Būḏāsf, One Thousand and One Nights*).[41] Above all, this kind of evolution is very similar to the development of the *BSP* itself, as outlined it the section above. However, the question of how the OHON crossed from the east of the Muslim world over to Andalusia must for the time being remain open.

The discovery made in 2010 of the Aga Khan manuscript, and the subsequent translation of it by Claudia Ott, may allow for new insights into the history of the transmission of the *BSP*. The value of this evidence comes from

34 Marzolph/Chraïbi, "Hundred", pp. 305–06; Ott (trans.), *101 Nacht*, pp. 246–47, 250.

35 Ibid., pp. 250–51.

36 Ibid., pp. 242–45.

37 On the manuscripts, see below note 43.

38 On the arguments, see Marzolph/Chraïbi, "Hundred", p. 303; Ott (trans.), *101 Nacht,* p. 246.

39 loc. cit.

40 Ott, *101 Nacht*, pp. 246–47.

41 See the contributions by R. Volk, C. Ott and B. Krönung in this volume.

the remarkable antiquity of the manuscript, which has been dated to 1234, though it must have been copied from an older collection still.[42] Before this discovery was made, only much later manuscripts had been known.[43] If we focus solely on the *Story of the Seven Viziers* from this collection, it is clear that the Aga Khan manuscript preserves the oldest recension of the narrative in **A101**, whereas the later manuscripts presumably transmit a much-revised version of this story.

On the basis of the 19 stories that make up the core of the *BSP*, it is possible to offer significant observations about the place of the OHON in the history of the transmission of the *BSP*. Already a cursory glance at the table appended to the present chapter shows a striking closeness between **G/Syr**, **A**, **Sp** and **A101**, while the order of stories in **A1001**, in **H**, and above all in **P1** of this group, significantly deviates in each of these versions.[44] This suggests that the core of **A101**, together with **Syr/G**,**A**, and **Sp**, finds itself very close to the Middle Persian original. Similarities in the arrangement of the stories in **P1** and **H** show the closeness of these two versions. This has lead Perry to conclude that , in addition to a Persian exemplar, **P1** used a source very closely related to **H** that belonged to the tradition of the *Arabic Rifacimento*.[45]

Certain overlaps can also be observed between **P1** and **A101**. For example, in **A101**, Sindbad tells the story of *The Elephant Keeper*[46] in order to illustrate the impact that a successfully delivered lecture could have. This episode is found outside the core of the nineteen stories, just before the section that describes Sindbad making a contract with the king. This story, as told by Sindbad, features in solely one other version of *BSP*, namely in **P1**. Here we find it in the opening section of the book; immediately after another two interpolated tales.[47] What is striking about this arrangement is that the different manuscripts of **A101** clearly deviate from one another in how they present the passage preceding the *Elephant Keeper*, whereas **P1** plainly preserves the

42 On the manuscript and its dating, see ibid., pp. 252–56. See, also Marzolph/Chraïbi, “Hundred”, p. 307.

43 Of these, only the following three are dated: Paris MS 3662, dated 1190/1776 (ed. Ṭaršūna), the Algerian Manuscript, dated 1257/1841 (ed. Šuraybiṭ; unavailable to me) and the Tunis manuscript 04576, dated 1268/1852. The French translation of Gaudefroy is based on MS Paris 3660; see also Marzolph/Chraïbi, “Hundred”, pp. 303–04.

44 The table shows only the stories that feature in the central section of the *BSP* that the wise men and the king’s wife tell during the prince’s seven-day silence.

45 Perry, “Origin”, p. 84.

46 *101 Nacht*, trans. Ott, pp. 142–43; *Cent et Une Nuits*, trans. Gaudefroy, p. 136. On the Indian origin of this story, see: Comparetti, Researches, pp. 29–30.

47 Zahiri de Samarkand, *Le Livre*, trans. Bogdanović, pp. 41–51.

recension found in the more recent group of manuscripts of **A101**.[48] Only in this group does the *Elephant Keeper* precede the episode about the selection of a suitable tutor for the king's son, which, remarkably, is entirely absent from the Aga Kahn manuscript. Admittedly, some other versions of *BSP* also feature the episode of the selection of a tutor,[49] but a few elements found only in **A101** and **P1** show that az-Zahīrī undoubtedly drew on **A101**, and moreover, in a recension witnessed only in much later manuscripts: in both these versions, a tutor is selected only after the king has handed over his twelve-year-old son to a teacher, who then instructs him for many years (in **P1**: ten years) in vain (this passage still appears in both recensions of **A101**).[50] Yet only in the later recension of **A101** and in **P1** does the king congregate 1000 wise men in order to find a suitable tutor for his son after the mentioned long lasting teaching without success.[51] That **P1** expands its subsequent storylines on the basis of an exemplar from the later recension of **A101** can be clearly gauged from the following: in **A101**, four out of the thousand assembled wise men are asked how they would teach the prince. When they answer, Sindbad remarks that he has already taught the prince in the manner that they propose, but without any success.[52] In reply, the wise men harshly rebuke Sindbad, using proverbial criticisms such as 'words without deeds are like thunder without rain.'[53] To this, Sindbad responds with the story of the *Elephant Keeper* in order to illustrate that knowledge can control the body once it has seized the heart.[54] Only now does everyone acknowledge the wisdom of Sindbad, who subsequently commits himself to completing the prince's education inside six months.[55] In **P1**, on the other hand, seven out of the thousand wise men are selected

48 The passage features both in MS Paris 3660 (trans. Gaudefroy) and MS Paris 3662 (ed. Ṭaršūna), although the similarities between **P** and MS Paris 3660 are especially abundant (see, below, n. 49–52).

49 So in **A**, **A1001**, **Sp,** and **H**, although all these are significantly different from **A101** and **P1**. In **Syr/G,** the motif of the teachers selection is completely missing; on this passage across different versions, see: Perry, "Origin", pp. 68–70.

50 *101 Nacht*, trans. Ott, p. 142; *Cent et Une Nuits*, trans. Gaudefroy, p. 135; Zahiri de Samarkand, *Le Livre*, trans. Bogdanović, p. 38.

51 *Cent et Une Nuits*, trans. Gaudefroy, p. 135; Zahiri de Samarkand, *Le Livre*, transl. Bogdanović, p. 39. In MS Paris 3662 (ed. Ṭaršūna, p. 232), the number of wise men is not mentioned.

52 *Cent et Une Nuits*, trans. Gaudefroy, p. 135; MS Paris 3662 (ed. Ṭaršūna, p. 233).

53 The passage featuring accusations and the proverb 'words without deeds are like thunders without rain' is missing from MS Paris 3662 (ed. Ṭaršūna). This shows a special proximity between MS Paris 3660 (trans. Gaudefroy) and **P1**.

54 *Cent et Une Nuits*, trans. Gaudefroy, p. 136.

55 Ibid., pp. 136–37.

– presumably in deliberate anticipation of the motif of seven wise men that features so prominently in the main storyline – among whom we also find Sindbad, who is then extolled by the others as the wisest of them. After Sindbad tells two stories to demonstrate his humbleness in the face of their praise,[56] he is commissioned to teach the prince.[57] As Sindbad's teaching, despite its great duration, proves unsuccessful, he is summoned to account for himself to the king. In order to justify his failure, Sindbad tells the story of the *Elephant Keeper*.[58] When he then remarks that the stars are finally favourable for the prince's education to be a success, he is met with scepticism from the wise men who say, *inter alia*, that every promise, if not kept, resembles 'a cloud without rain.' Regardless of this expression of doubt, Sindbad is appointed, this time by contract, to carry out the prince's education within six months. Quite clearly, **P1** adopts from **A101** the reference to Sindbad's failed attempt to educate the prince. Sindbad's remark, found in **A101** (see note 50), in which he probably refers to the earlier unsuccessful attempt at the education of the prince from the age of twelve, but there without explicitly naming the teacher, was expanded in **P1** into a reduplicated narrative thread, concerning the prince's failed instruction, that sits somewhat uncomfortably with the main storyline of the *BSP*. This narrative glitch is nevertheless left unchanged, only to be followed by the *Story of the Elephant Keeper*, and the proverb 'words without deeds are like thunder without rain.' We must therefore consider as untenable Perry's theory that the reduplication of the motif of unsuccessful teaching, as it occurs in **P1**, represents the result of the merger of two separate traditions: the one that does not name the teacher found only in **Syr/G,** thus pointing in the direction of the lost middle Persian source; and the one that attributes the failure to Sindbad stemming from a version of the *Arabic Rifacimento* (and therefore preserved in **A**, **Sp**, **H** and **A1001**).[59] Rather, it must be assumed that the editor of a later recension of **A101** amended the older recension of the Aga Khan manuscript in agreement with an available version of the *Arabic Rifacimento* that contained the gathering of 1000 wise men as well as Sindbad's mention of a past failure as the prince's teacher, with this version of **A101** being used as source material for **P1** by az-Zahīrī. This evidence clearly demonstrates the need to re-examine thoroughly Perry's conjecture that the common features found in **Syr/Gr** and **P1** must necessarily stem directly from Middle

56 Zahiri de Samarkand, *Le Livre*, trans. Bogdanović, pp. 40–43.

57 Ibid., p. 44.

58 Ibid., pp. 47–48.

59 Perry, "Origin", p. 72.

Persian.[60] And at any rate, it allows us safely to assume that az-Zahīrī's source material, in addition to **H**, also included a version of **A101** that had already been revised and adapted from a considerably simpler form of the Aga Khan manuscript. Support for the primacy of the Aga-Khan manuscript over all other recensions of **A101** can also be found in the existence of verses.[61] Are these perhaps to be understood as a relic of Abān al-Lāḥiqī's versified version? In addition, the significant role attributed to astrologers in the Sindbad-Story from the **A101** (and particularly from the Aga Khan manuscript) is clearly already there in the opening section of the narrative, when astrology is used to provide advice to the king, who is in distress over his failure to produce a son and heir. The presence of this motif strengthens the assumption that here we have a version particularly close to the middle Persian prototype.[62] The above-stated evidence for the high degree of originality in **A101** in the Aga Khan manuscript should be considered together with the fact that its frame- story displays a significant degree of dissimilarity from **Syr/G**, both in micro- and macro-textual details. Furthermore, this strongly suggests that the *BSP* reached **A101**, not by way of Mūsā's rewriting, but rather via Abān al-Lāḥiqī's, or at least by way of a version entirely unknown to us today.

It would be possible to make further observations in support of the argument that **A101** represents one of the most ancient surviving versions of the *BSP*, and the recension in the Aga Khan manuscript probably *the* most ancient. A line of investigation that could prove especially fruitful in any future study would involve verifying these claims by way of further collation work to be carried out on the remaining versions and recensions of the *BSP*.

60 As regards the other passages that appear only in **Syr/G** and **P1** (for example, ibid., p. 73), a possibility should be taken into consideration that az-Zahīrī, in addition to **H** and **A101,** also knew the Arabic version by Mūsā.

61 *101 Nacht*, trans. Ott, pp. 147 and 152–53.

62 On the great importance of astrology in the context of middle Persian court culture, see Belcher, "Diffusion", p. 44.

APPENDIX Book of Sinbad (*incorporated stories*)

Day	Narrator	Story (G)	Syr	P1	A	Sp	H	A101	A1001 (Calcutta II)
1	1. Wise Man	1 Lion's Track	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
		2 Parrot	2	5	2	2	2	2	2
2	Woman	3 Drowning Fuller	3	3	3	3	3	3	3 (+1) Chaste Woman
	2. Wise Man	4 Loaves of Bred	4	16	4	4	16	4	4
		5 Infidelity	5	8	5	5	11	5	5
3	Woman	6 Prince and Ogress	6	6	6	6	6.9	6	6
	3. Wise Man	7 Honey	7	13	7	7	13	7	7
		8 Rice and Sugar	8	11	8	-	14	8	8
4	Woman	9 Gender-changing Spring	9	12	9	9	15	9	9
	4. Wise Man	10 Bathman	-	10	10	10	4	10	10
		11 Procuress and Dog	11	11	11	11	8	11	11
5	Woman	12 Wild Boar and Monkey	12	7	12	12	12	12	(12) Goldsmith
	5. Wise Man	13 Snake and Dog	13	4	13	13	10	13	(13) Impoverished
		14 Burnt Mantle	14	(14) Father-in-law	14	14	5	14	-
6	Woman	15 Thief, Lion and Monkey	15	15	15	15	-	15	(15) Wife of Trader (+1) Language of Birds
	6. Wise Man	16 Pigeons	16	18	16	16	-	(16) Fisherman	(16) Five Lovers
		17 Elephant Figure	17	14	17	17	18	17	18
7	Woman	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	(+1) Collar; 16; (+1) Prince
	7. Wise Man	18 Three Wishes	18	1	-	18	-	18	(18) Son of Trader
		19 Connoisseur of women	19	19	18	19	-	19	(19) Beloved of Demon

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CHAPTER 15

Fighting with Tales: 2 The Byzantine *Book of Syntipas the Philosopher**

Ida Toth

The *Book of Syntipas the Philosopher* (henceforth BSP) reached the Greek-reading audiences on the easternmost Byzantine frontier at a time when this part of the empire was almost entirely dominated by political instability and military conflict. A witness to a lively literary exchange in the last decades of the 11th century, and a remarkable piece of prose fiction in its own right, the BSP found its way into the Byzantine canon of didactic literature in a translation from Syriac.[1] Rich in overtones of fantasy and exoticism, literary material on *Syntipas* belongs to the long tradition of Persian and Arabic storytelling. Its uninterrupted, if meandering, transmission generated ever more elaborate storylines and captivating reading-content of a kind that the modern scholarship tends to describe as 'eastern'. As a sort of compass marker, however, the term 'eastern' may lead to confusion, in a manner that is best illustrated by the fact that the so-called Eastern Group of the BSP includes some traditions that began in the medieval West.[2] Any vagueness here is perhaps best circumvented in discussions of the origin and diffusion of Syntipas-Story by using linguistic

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1 The BSP is one of the rare texts to have been translated from Syriac into Greek in the 11th century. This, however, should not be viewed as a complete oddity. In this period, the importance of Syriac language increased in the wider Levantine area, and in particular in Melitene, which became the centre of a cultural revival: Brock/Butts/ et al., (eds.), *The Gorgias Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, *s.v.* "Sindbad". A further translation was made in Melitene in this period, from Greek into Armenian, of a Life of St Eudocia: Vest, *Geschichte der Stadt Melitene* vol. 3, p. 1520, and note 2.

2 The Eastern (or Oriental) Group includes Syriac, Greek, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Spanish versions, in short, all versions whose structure and content can be traced back to a common eastern, probably Persian, prototype. For the summary of the question, and relevant secondary literature, see: the chapter by B. Krönung in this volume, pp. 365–79.

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determiners such as Persian, Arabic, Syriac, Greek, Hebrew, and Catalan.[3] By contrast, the modern misnomers 'prose fiction' and 'novel' that have been freely applied to the BSP without bearing any direct relation to categories within ancient and medieval literary poetics, seem unhelpful.[4] With the proviso that any choice of critical terminology in what follows will necessarily be arbitrary, and that it will be used in purely descriptive sense, this essay recognizes the gradual dissemination of the BSP across diverse storytelling traditions in 'the shared library of the Middle Ages',[5] while focusing on one stage of its enduring history. It examines the Byzantine setting in which this narrative was adapted for a new, Greek-reading audience, and which in turn secured its further promulgation within, and outside, the Greek linguistic medium. The BSP allows a great deal of scope for the study of cultural continuity and change, particularly from the 11th-century perspective; it offers illuminating insights into distinct dynamics between patrons, authors, and readers, and into the motives that inspired them to introduce foreign models and styles in their own literary idiom; finally, it casts considerable light on the role of translation in the context of a culture that was not openly responsive to influences from outside, even when individual examples of interaction confirm their impact to have been both significant and meaningful.[6]

3 In what follows, the two medieval Greek translations of the BSP are also referred to as Byzantine under the understanding that they were generated and promulgated within the Byzantine cultural and literary sphere.

4 Stories of love and adventure, fictional biographies, historicizing accounts, sometimes in epistolary forms, utopian and fantastic travelogues, and apocryphal and hagiographical texts featuring fantastic and miraculous episodes all have been variously classified as 'novels', 'romances' and 'prose fiction'. Most recently the modern scholarship has shifted towards relating literary processes within the text to particular, clearly delineated, cultural and historical context. Secondary literature on this subject is vast; the current debate, while still remaining inconclusive, has departed from quests for origins, generic definitions and diachronic development towards a more synthetic exploration of the patterns, modes, stances, and discourses of imagination and fictionality across, and between, literary cultures. The editors of the present volume reflect this shift by their choice of the overarching theme of fictional storytelling: Cupane/Krönung, "Introduction" in this volume, pp. 1–16. See also, e.g., Whitmarsh-Thomson, (eds.), *The Romance between Greece and the East*, pp. 1–19; Roilos (ed.), *Medieval Greek Storytelling*.

5 Cupane/Krönung, "Introduction", p. 4.

6 The edition of the 11th-century Greek translation of the BSP: Jernstedt-Nikitin, (eds.), *Michaelis Andreopuli Liber Syntipae*, pp. 3–130 (henceforth *Liber Syntipae*).

Literary Context

The group of texts that come under the heading of middle Byzantine eastern prose fiction consists of three narratives: *Barlaam and Joasaph*, *Stephanites and Ichnelates,* and *The Book of Syntipas the Philosopher*.[7] These reached Greek-speaking readers in their first, or new, translations into Greek, in the 11th century. They display many features in common, including:

- Transmission: a long and well-attested dissemination in eastern languages;
- Subject-matter: their main plots revolve around the idea of the role of intellectuals in princely education, and include numerous fabulistic, novelistic, and didactic elements;
- Narrative structure: their main and subsidiary plots are presented as frame stories. Although not completely novel, these structural devices became more widespread following the translations of the three books of eastern prose fiction in the middle Byzantine period.[8]
- Language and style: broadly speaking, the register, syntax and vocabulary of the middle Byzantine *koine*;
- The abundant use of paratext (in Genettian terms): all three narratives supply plentiful information of their foreign, i.e. eastern, provenance. Their book epigrams, titles, and prefaces convey the identity and agendas of their authors, editors and translators, and help to show what made such texts popular, and why they continued to be transmitted for centuries.

The transmission of the BSP from its middle Persian source, through its Arabic and Syriac revisions, to its translation into medieval Greek, testifies to the dis-

7 Kechagioglou, "Translations of Eastern 'Novels'" pp. 156–66. On the eastern narratives in Byzantium, see also Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung und Rezeption*; Condylis-Bassoukos, *Stephanites kai Ichnelates*; Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*; Kechagioglou, "Ο βυζαντινός και μεταβυζαντινός Συντίπας"; Toth, "Authorship and Authority".

8 Frame-story, also called "Rahmenerzählung" or "cornice", is a literary device whereby a string of mutually independent stories are represented as being told by one of more characters in the primary story. The narrative frames of middle Byzantine Eastern-style prose are not uniform: the frame structures of *Barlaam and Ioasaph* and *BSP* are, for example, simpler, and more paratactic, than that of *Stephanites and Ichnelates*, which features a series of much more elaborate Chinese-box frames. On the structural devices of these texts, see: Perry, "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", p. 17; and Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung und Rezeption*, pp. 124–25; Toth, "Authorship and Authority", pp. 95–99.

tinctly multicultural and multilingual character of the book.[9] Some of this history is recorded in the prologue of the Byzantine BSP for the benefit of Greek readers. Notably, its opening lines cite the title of the Syriac exemplar as the *Book of Syntipas the Philosopher*. Even more revealingly, they state that the Greek text has been translated from Syriac, and that its ultimate source is Persian/Arabic.[10]

The immediate circumstances under which the BSP entered Byzantine literature can be reconstructed from the evidence of a book epigram that survives in the 14th-century manuscript Mosquensis Synodalis 436, f. 251v.[11] Inscribed on the title page of the BSP, this poem lends voice to the translator, who uses the medium of the dodecasyllable to relate his background and his motives for presenting the BSP to his Greek-speaking readers:

> I, Michael, a Christian, and the most humble *grammatikos*, have presented this book at the behest of the illustrious patrician Gabriel, the revered duke of the city that derives its name from the word 'honey', and a truly ardent servant of Christ.[12]

Gabriel's involvement in the production of the Greek BSP commends him as a man of letters, and a patron of learning:

> [Gabriel] ordered [the book] to be written because the Romans did not possess such a volume. This story derides evildoers and, ultimately and

9 On the transmission of the Eastern Group of the BSP: Perry, "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", passim and the chapter "The Arabic Book of Sindbad" by B. Krönung in this volume, pp. 365–79.

10 *Liber Syntipae*, ed. Jernstedt/Nikitin, p. 3, ll. 4–9: Πρόλογος τοῦ πρωτοτύπου ἤτοι τοῦ ἀντιβολαίου, τῆς συρικῆς βίβλου τῆς λεγομένης Συντίπα τοῦ φιλοσόφου, ἔχων αὐταῖς λέξεσιν οὕτως· Διήγησις ἐμφιλόσοφος, [...] ἥντινα διήγησιν προϊστόρησε Μοῦσος ὁ Πέρσης πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων ὠφέλειαν. (The prologue of the prototype or *antibolaion* of the Syriac *Book of Syntipas the Philosopher*, which reads as follows: "A philosophical tale [...] which Mousos the Persian composed for the benefit of his readers".).

11 Jernstedt's edition of the BSP includes the edition and the facsimile of the poem: *Liber Syntipae*, pp. 1 and 131. On Mosq. Synod 436 (formerly Vlad. 298), see, most recently: Roueché, "The place of Kekaumenos in the admonitory tradition", pp. 134–38.

12 *Liber Syntipae*, ed. Jernstedt/Nikitin, p. 1, ll. 8–13: τῶν γραμματικῶν ἔσχατός γε τυγχάνων, / Ἀνδρεόπωλος Μιχαήλ, Χριστοῦ λάτρις, / ἔργον τεθεικὼς προστεταγμένον τόδε / παρὰ Γαβριὴλ τοῦ μεγιστάνων κλέους, /δουκὸς σεβαστοῦ πόλεως μελωνύμου, / ὅς ἐστι Χριστοῦ θερμὸς ὄντως ἱκέτης.

most importantly, it celebrates deeds carried out in a noble and righteous manner.[13]

The lines above make it clear that in his capacity as a local magnate Gabriel promotes new kind of edifying literature intended to instruct and inspire exemplary conduct.

The Plot

The BSP unfolds in a manner common to all eastern versions of the book.[14] The main plot revolves around the story of princely education. King Cyrus's son and heir completes his studies under the most notable teacher of their time, Syntipas, who also instructs his student to remain silent for seven days in order to avoid mortal danger. During this period of silence, one of the king's wives tries to seduce the prince, and slanders him before his father, who then orders his execution. The Seven Wise Men stall the punishment by, successively, telling two stories each day, one to exemplify the dangers of rashness and one, the malice of women, while the stepmother retaliates by narrating tales of unreliable court advisers and the wickedness of men. Eventually, the ill-omened period passes, the prince speaks, the king revokes his judgment, and punishes his wily wife instead. The remaining part of the BSP features the prince's tribute to his teacher, Syntipas's praise of astronomy, the prince's summation of Ten Ethical Chapters, and a series of questions and answers exchanged between the king and his son. The narrative frames and elaborate story lines of the BSP can be outlined as follows:[15]

13 13 ibid., ll. 14–18: ὃς καὶ διωρίσατο γραφῆναι τάδε, / ὅτι γε μὴ πρόσεστι Ῥωμαίων βίβλοις. / ἡ συγγραφὴ γὰρ ἥδε τοὺς κακεργάτας / διασύρει μάλιστα καὶ πρὸς τῷ τέλει / πράξεις ἐπαινεῖ τὰς καλῶς εἰργασμένας. – Gabriel is a well-known historical figure attested as Doux and Amir of Melitene, Protokouropalatēs, Protonobelissimos, Armenian by ethnicity, Orthodox Christian by faith, father-in-law of Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem. For the full list of primary sources on Gabriel, see the database of the PBW: Jeffreys/al. (eds.), *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*; also, see: Vest, *Geschichte der Stadt Melitene*, pp. 1516ff.

14 For the collated summary of all eastern versions, see: Comparetti, *Researches respecting the Book of Sindibad* and Perry, "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", pp. 58–84. Also, see: Krönung, "The Arabic Book of Sindbad", in this volume, pp. 365–79.

15 The references to page and line numbers that follow are based on Jernstedt's edition of Andreopulos' translation. They do not include Jernstedt's edition of the so-called Retractatio of the BSP, which he presents in parallel with Andreopoulos' text.

p. 1, Book Epigram
p. 3, ll. 1–9: Prologue
pp. 3, l. 10 – 4, l. 9: King Cyrus has seven wives but no children. He prays, and a son is born to him. The first three years of the boy's education come to no avail.
pp. 4, l. 10 – 6, l. 5: The king enters into a written contract with Syntipas, who promises to educate the prince in medical art and philosophy within six months.
pp. 6, l. 6 – 8, l. 10: Syntipas builds a house for his student, and has its walls inscribed with his teachings; the philosophical education of the young prince ends with Syntipas' astrological predictions, and the prince's seven-day oath of silence.
pp. 8, l. 11 – 12, l. 3: The silent prince's audience at his father's court; the prince rejects his step-mother; her accusations and the king's pronouncement of death penalty.
p. 12, ll. 4 – 16: Seven Wise Men attempt to persuade the king to show mercy by telling him stories every day.

Seven Days of Story-Telling

Day One

pp. 12, l. 17- 15, l. 16: Wise Man One, Story One: A King Who Falls in Love with a Married Woman
pp. 15, l. 17- 18, l. 12: Wise Man One, Story Two: A Merchant, His Wife and a Discredited Parrot

Day Two

pp. 18, l. 15 – 19, l. 10: Step-mother, Story One: A Fuller Who Dies Saving His Drowning Son
pp. 19, l. 11 – 22, l. 6: Wise Man Two, Story One: Two 'Pure' Cakes;
pp. 22, l. 7 – 24, l. 10: Wise Man Two, Story Two: A Woman, Her Husband, An Officer, and His Slave

Day Three

pp. 24, l. 11 – 27, l. 13: Step-mother, Story One: A Prince and An Ogress
pp. 28, l. 1 – 29, l. 12: Wise Man Three, Story One: A War Over a Stolen Beehive
pp. 29, l. 12 – 32, L. 2: Wise Man Three, Story Two: A Woman with Appetite for Sugar Rice

Day Four

pp. 32, l. 2 – 35, l. 12: Step-mother, Story One: A Prince, a Gardener, and a Gender-changing Spring

pp. 35, l. 13 – 38, l. 2: Wise Man Four, Story One: An Obese Prince, a Bath-keeper, and His Wife
pp. 38, l. 3 – 43, l. 6: Wise Man Four, Story Two: A Woman Tricked into Infidelity by a Procuress
pp. 43, l.9 – 44, l. 11: Step-mother, Story Two: A Wild Boar and a Monkey

Day Five
pp. 44, l. 14 – 46, l. 15: Wise Man Five, Story One: An Officer and His Faithful Dog
pp. 46, l. 16 – 52, l. 2: Wise Man Five, Story Two: An Obstinate Suitor, a Virtuous Woman, and a Burnt Mantle
pp. 52, l. 4 -54, l. 10: Step-mother, Story One: A Thief, a Lion, and a Monkey

Day Six
pp. 54, l. 13 – 56, l. 18: Wise Man Six, Story One: Two Pigeons and a Store of Corn
pp. 56, l. 18 – 59, l. 1: Wise Man Six, Story Two: Elephant-shaped Honey Cake

Day Seven
pp. 59, l.1- 61, l. 12: The step-mother threatens to throw herself into a pyre if the king does not execute his son. The king assents, and the prince is about to be put to sword. Seven Wise Men bribe the executioner, and persuade him to wait until the king has heard a further two stories from them.
pp. 61, l. 13 – 65, l. 8: Wise Man Seven, Story One: Three Wishes
pp. 65, l. 9 – 71, l. 8: Wise Man Seven, Story Two: Ultimate Collection of Women's Tricks[16]

Day Eight
pp. 71, l. 12 – 73, l. 13: The prince finally speaks. He explains his silence to Cyrus' chief adviser, who gives the good news to his king. The prince is summoned to his father's audience.
pp. 73, l. 14 – 76, l. 9: The prince explains his actions to his father. The king rejoices and convenes his court, summoning the Wise Men and Syntipas, who then vindicates himself.
pp. 76, l. 10 – 79, l. 2: The king addresses the assembly with the question: "If I had executed my son, who would have been responsible: I, my son, or my wife?" Four Wise Men and Syntipas respond, each with a different answer.

16 Andreopoulos' version does not include the sub-story about a Woman, Her Misogynistic Husband, and the 'Harvest' of Fish, which we find in the later Greek version (*Liber Syntipae*, pp. 68, l. 5 – 69, l. 20).

pp. 79, l. 3 – 83, l. 10: The prince responds with a story about a Slave and Poisoned Milk to show the power of fate thereby demonstrating that he has completed his education, and has achieved utmost wisdom. To confirm this, the prince tells three more stories:
pp. 83, l. 11 – 85, l. 14: Story of a Three-year Old
pp. 85, l. 15 – 91, l. 14: Story of a Five-Year Old
pp. 91, l. 15 – 102, l. 15: Story of an Old Man
pp. 103, l. 5 – 104, l. 15: The prince recounts to the king how Syntipas made it possible for him to accomplish within six months what he could not despite the previous three years of studying.
pp. 105, l. 4 – 110, l. 10: The king's wife confesses her scheming, and surrenders herself to her husband's mercy. The king's noblemen propose mutilation and death, and the wife tells a Story of a Fox to beg for punishment that would keep her alive.
pp. 110, l. 11 – 112, l. 5: The prince proposes that his step-mother's hair is cut, her face blackened with soot, a bell fastened around her neck, and that she is then mounted on a donkey, facing backwards and paraded throughout the city, with two criers proclaiming the reasons for her punishment. The court approves, and the king consents.
pp. 112, p. 6 – 119, l. 5: Syntipas gives Cyrus his account of his teaching, and tells a story on the Importance of Astrology.
pp. 119, l. 6 – 121, l. 12: The prince outlines Syntipas' Ten Ethical Chapters, in which he has been instructed. Syntipas receives his compensation from Cyrus.
pp. 122, l. 1 – 129, l. 13: King's Twenty Questions and Prince's Answers on Kingship, Morality, and Fate.
pp. 129, 14 – 130, l. 3: Synopsis of the BSP.[17]

The *Book of Syntipas* in Middle Byzantine Literary Culture

The increasing attention that the 11th century has received in recent years has brought this period into a sharper focus as a time when new ideas and tastes, and cross-cultural influences, became manifest in many aspects of Byzantine life.[18] Extensive contacts between Byzantine and foreign polities encouraged

17 The synopsis is missing from the so-called Retractatio..

18 Kazhdan/Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*; Vlyssidou (ed.), *The Empire in Crisis* (?). The forthcoming publication of the Proceedings of the Spring Symposium on the transformation in Byzantium in the 11th century, held in Oxford in 2012, will shed

the movement of scholars and craftsmen, and the exchange of knowledge and artefacts, across the vast area of the eastern Mediterranean. Request for art and architecture featuring recognisable eastern(-style) content increases; this was, moreover, instigated and funded by imperial and aristocratic patronage on the periphery as well as at the very centre of the middle Byzantine world.[19] The literary sphere too opened itself to Levantine influences, and this allowed texts such as the BSP to make a timely appearance in response to the interests, demands and cultural expectations of both the educated class, and a wider reading public.

The BSP sits comfortably in the context of the literary culture of the 11th-century – a time, when Byzantine authors enjoyed considerable social mobility, and, perhaps by extension, when they displayed more self-conscious and self-confident authorial voices.[20] Secular literature, and poetry in particular, thrived.[21] High-level patronage for translations from eastern languages of astrological, meteorological, medical, and oneirocritical texts helped to propel strong interest in scientific matters.[22] Likewise, collections of useful sayings and animal stories circulated in greater numbers. These texts continued to play an essential role in elementary rhetorical education, but could also now be found embedded into more elaborate narratives such as histories and compilations of advice.[23] The well-attested practicing of astrology and divination,

more light on the political, social, and cultural changes that Byzantium underwent in this century.

19 Byzantine adoption of eastern artistic models and styles is visible in portable objects, such as textiles, ivory boxes, enamel containers, and metal vessels, as well as architecture, particularly buildings: Grabar, "Le rayonnement de l'art sassanide"; Walker, *The Emperor and the World*. On the 11th-century astrolabe commissioned and inscribed by *Protospatharios* and *Hypatos* Sergios the Persian, see Guillou, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques médiévales d'Italie*, no. 13, 14–15. On pseudo-kufic decoration in middle Byzantine churches and on artifacts, see Walker, "Pseudo-Arabic 'Inscriptions'".

20 On the authorial poetics in the 11th century, see: Bernard, "The Ethics of Authorship".

21 On 11th-century secular poetry: Bernard, *Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry*; id./Demoen (eds.), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*.

22 For middle Byzantine translations of eastern (mostly Arabic) texts into Byzantine literature, see above, note 7 and: Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation*; Gutas, "Arabic into Byzantine Greek".

23 On the survey of middle Byzantine collections of fables, see: Adrados, *History of the Greco-Latin Fable*, vol. 1, pp. 94–138; vol. 2, pp. 559–629; for the introduction on Greek (including middle Byzantine) gnomologies and for their texts, see: Searby, *Apophthegmata et gnomae secundum alphabetum*; for the use of collections of gnomai in Kekaumenos, see: Roueché, "Literary background of Kekaumenos", pp. 114–17. For Psellos's use of apophthegmata, see: Kampianaki, "Sayings Attributed to Emperors of Old and New Rome".

and the increased use of wisdom literature, may also explain why eastern narratives found a natural habitat in the 11th-century literary traditions. The *Syntipas*-Story in particular represents an exemplary case of a text whose appeal to Byzantine reading audiences can be explained by the way it corresponds with the modes and genres in Byzantine literature that became especially popular in the middle Byzantine period. The content of the book as a whole and of its constituent parts links it, in a manner of a literary *mise-en-abîme*, to parenetic texts, astrological treatises, fables, and collections of proverbs,[24] while its many elements of the marvelous, the supernatural and the exotic reflect a taste in these kinds of themes in contemporary Byzantine literature across the board, not least in hagiography.[25]

The same point can be made if the focus is widened to consider the manuscript transmission of the BSP, on which Ben Edwin Perry wrote long ago proposing that most Byzantine collections that included the fables and *Book of Syntipas* had been assembled in eastern Asia Minor in the late 11th century.[26] Perry's conjecture cannot be confirmed on the sole basis of the extant manuscript material, nor can it be ascertained that the Byzantine eastern frontier was the only entry zone for eastern literature. In fact, his hypothesis can be expanded to consider southern Italy as another area in which similar kinds of texts proliferated even earlier than in the Byzantine East.. The evidence of the manuscript Pierpont Morgan 397, for example, testifies to the circulation of eastern-style wisdom literature in the Western parts of the Byzantine world in the late 10th-early 11th centuries, albeit without *Syntipas* material, while the 12th-century south-Italian (re)-translation of *Stephanites and Ichnelates* into Greek indicates a persistent interest in eastern narrative-fiction in the West.[27]

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24 For the analyses of structure and motifs in the BSP, see: Perry, "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", pp. 84–94; Conca, *Novelle Bizantine,* pp. 13–32; Maltese, *Il libro di Sindbad*, pp. 14–32.

25 On the use of *phantasia* in middle Byzantine literature, and in Byzantine hagiography in particular, see: Kaldellis, "The Emergence of Literary Fiction in Byzantium"; Roilos, "*Phantasia* and the Ethics of Fictionality in Byzantium"; Messis, "Fiction and/or Novelisation in Byzantine Hagiography".

26 Perry examined Byzantine collections of the fables and *Book of Syntipas*, *Stephanites and Ichnelates* and the fables and the *Life of Aesop* as significant members of the body of gnomic and advisory literature: Perry, *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop*, pp. 185–89.

27 New York Pierpont Morgan M. 397/Codex Cryptoferratensis A33 has south Italian provenance. Among other texts, it includes the earliest Greek translation of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* entitled the *Fables of Bidpai*, *Life* and fables of Aesop, and *Physiologos*: Husselman, "A Fragment of Kalilah and Dimnah". For a summary of the current scholarship on the

Furthermore, such literary pursuits were not restricted to the fringes of the Greek-speaking world. The Byzantine capital also witnessed similar efforts, as is attested by the work of Symeon Seth, a court astrologer, physician and philosopher, whose Greek translation from Arabic of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, entitled *Stephanites and Ichnelates,* was commissioned by a patron of the highest standing, the emperor Alexios Komnenos himself.[28] To all of the above, further evidence can be added, of the will of Eustathios Boilas, an imperial *protospatharios* and *hypatos*, who lived in the eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire in the mid-eleventh century. Among the various possessions of this provincial official, his document lists books owned by Boilas. "My priceless treasure", as he calls them, included the *Oneirokritikon* together with the *Lives of Aesop* and *Alexander*.[29] This confirms that eastern-style texts were circulated fairly widely, and that they were, from early on, transmitted together with diverse story-telling traditions on Aesop and Alexander. That much can also be deduced from the surviving manuscript material, in which eastern narrative fiction appears together with animal stories, both fables and the *Physiologus*, and, once again, with fictional accounts of Aesop- and Alexander's lives.[30] Inevitably, such collections were continuously enriched and modified, but their core remained surprisingly stable, even as they were being copied, circulated, and dispersed later on and further afield, including in the medieval Slavonic world.[31]

The depiction of Syntipas as a Persian astronomer, teacher and court adviser, undoubtedly played a role in promoting eastern-style wisdom-literature that was gaining popularity in the middle Byzantine period. In the same meta-

12th-century version of *Stephanites and Ichnelates*, known as the Eugenian recention, see the chapter by B. Krönung in this volume, pp. 453–56.

28 Magdalino, "The Porphyrogenita and the Astrologers", pp. 19–21 and id., "The Byzantine Reception of Classical Astrology", pp. 46–54. See also the chapter "The Wisdom of the Beasts" by B. Krönung in this volume, pp. 449–53.

29 Boilas' will has been edited and commented on by Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 15–63. See, also: Roueché, "Byzantine Writers and Readers" spec. pp. 126–27.

30 The two main witnesses of Andreopoulos' version of the BSP, Mosq. Synod 436 (formerly Vlad. 298) and Monacensis gr. 525, both include fables attributed to Syntipas, *Stephanites and Ichnelates*, and the *Life* and *Fables of Aesop* (Mosqu. Syn 298 also contains the *Physiologos* and the *Life of Alexander*). On the contents of these manuscripts, see: Roueché, "The place of Kekaumenos", pp. 134–38 and Hinterberger, "Ο Ανδρέας Λιβαδηνός, συγγραφέας/γραφέας". In addition, similar core material is preserved in the following manuscripts of the BSP: Paris. Suppl. Gr. 105, Vindob. Philol. Gr. 166 and Hierosolym. Gr. 208.

31 In medieval Slavonic literature, for example, the *Lives of Aesop* and *Alexander*, *Physiologos*, and the *Story of Wicked Women* all appear together in the so-called second type of Slavonic miscellanies: Toth, "The Story of Iosop the Wise", pp. 118ff.

referential manner in which the BSP may be understood as mirroring, and even creating, tastes and interests in contemporary reading-culture, the eponymous protagonist of the book, Syntipas, can be seen as a literary projection of the emerging image of the 11th-century Byzantine intellectual. In its Byzantine guise, the character of Syntipas could be viewed, metonymically, as an aspirational, self-assertive, and self-styled Byzantine *philosopher*, whose erudition leaves him ideally placed to dispense moral guidance, endorse aristocratic values, and offer practical advice on governance.[32] This kind of expertise would have resonated with the circles at the imperial court in the centre of Byzantine power, as well as among local magnates such as Gabriel of Melitene, and his counterparts on the frontiers in Anatolia, the Balkans, and Southern Italy. These individuals constituted the prime audience of the narratives such as the BSP: they could draw benefit from its morals, be entertained by its colourful content, and secure its continuing promulgation across the expanse of the Greek-speaking world.

Generic Implications and Literary Devices

The prologue of the BSP refers to Mousos, a Persian, as the author, who composes this story "for the benefit of his readers" (πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων ὠφέλειαν).[33] The attribution of authorship to Mousos speaks in no unclear terms of a foreign, and, more precisely, eastern, provenance for the story. The use of the term ὠφέλεια, here translated as "benefit",' is also highly significant.

32 Arabic versions of the BSP never use 'philosopher' in connection to Sindbad or the Seven Wise Men. Sindbad is sometimes called 'the wise' (arab. *al-ḥakīm*), or he is designated only as 'teacher' (arab. *mu'allim*"). The Wise Men (Viziers) are consistently described as 'ministers/court advisers' (arab. *wazīr*, pl. *wuzarā'*), and, by extension, 'the educated, the intellectuals' (arab. *min ahl al-'alam*). The earliest Syriac and Greek versions seem to be the first to commonly use the term 'philosopher' for Sindbad/Syntipas and, infrequently, for the Seven Wise Men. (I am grateful to Bettina Krönung for her advice on the terminology used in the Arabic transmission of the BSP). The term 'philosopher' is used as persistently in the BSP as in the 11th-century public and literary discourse in Byzantium. On the Byzantine perception of philosophy in 11th-century, see: Duffy, "Hellenic Philosophy in Byzantium"; Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos. Rhetoric and Authorship*, pp. 29–39; Bernard, "The Ethics of Authorship", pp. 52–57; Kaldellis, "The emergence of literary fiction", pp. 120–26.

33 *Liber Syntipae*, p. 3, ll. 8–9 (see, above: note 10). The modern scholarship has identified Mousos as the 9th-century Arabic scholar and translator of Persian literature, Mūsā b. 'Īsā al-Kisrawī: Perry",The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", p. 33.

Beyond merely disclosing the motivation for the initial composition of the BSP, it situates this book in the broader context of didactic literature. This message is highlighted again in the concluding verses of the book epigram, which proclaim the aim (τέλος) of the BSP to be the mockery of evil and praise of noble deeds.[34]

Moreover, the prologue describes the BSP as a "story pertaining to philosophy" (διήγησις ἐμφιλόσοφος). This description could be understood to mean a "story about Syntipas the Philosopher", that is, to indicate a composition that uses the deeds of the main characters as its narrative axis, as in, for example, the *Lives* of Alexander, Aesop, Homer and even the epic of Digenis.[35] The continuation of the prologue expands on this definition. It claims to introduce "a philosophical tale of the Persian King Cyrus, and his legitimate son, and the son's teacher Syntipas as well as of the king's seven philosophers, and one of his wives…" thus situating the BSP more precisely in the context of didactic court literature.[36] The Byzantines may not have used any specific term to correspond to the generic label 'Mirror of Princes', but they were certainly fine-tuned to recognize the tenor of these allusions. The notion of the emperor as the principal patron of learning, and of intellectual excellence as a prior requirement for the roles of tutors and advisers to rulers, was deep-rooted in Byzantine literary culture. The BSP undoubtedly benefited from such familiarity, even if its setting at an eastern court, and the plot revolving around a wily woman, may have added a certain sense of novelty, and noticeable alterity.[37]

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34 See above, note 13.

35 Διήγησις broadly translates as a "narrative, story, tale". On the use of the term in the rhetorical theory and early Byzantine hagiography, see: Rapp, "Storytelling as Spiritual Communication"; in Byzantine vernacular romances, see: Agapitos, "SO Debate Genre, Structure and Poetics", pp. 12–26, 57–58, and the responses to Agapitos against the use of διήγησις as a narrowly defined generic label: C. Cupane, ibid., pp. 54–58; U. Moennig, ibid., pp. 66–71; I. Nilsson, ibid., pp. 71–74.

36 *Liber Syntipae*, p. 3, ll. 4–7: Διήγησις ἐμφιλόσοφος, συγγραφεῖσα παρ' ἡμῶν περὶ τοῦ τῶν Περσῶν βασιλέως Κύρου καὶ τοῦ γνησίου τούτου παιδὸς καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ διδασκάλου Συντίπα, ἔτι δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν τοῦ βασιλέως ἑπτὰ φιλοσόφων καὶ τῆς μιᾶς αὐτοῦ … γυναικὸς …

37 The BSP has so far only been acknowledged as featuring an integrated Mirror of Princes: Prinzing, "Beobachtungen zu ‚integrierten' Fürstenspiegeln", p. 6. B. Krönung points out that *Kalīla wa-Dimna* was understood as a Mirror of Princes: see her chapter in this volume, pp. 440–41 and 451–54. More recently, Paolo Odorico has discussed the generic fluidity of advice literature addressed to the emperor making only a cursory remark about the *Barlaam and Ioasaph* as belonging to this category of texts, but without any reference to the other eastern narratives: Odorico, "Les miroirs des princes à Byzance", passim and p. 245. Odorico's contention that Mirrors of Princes did not exist in Byzantium as a specific

The strategic choice of terminology, as outlined above, seems to constitute a significant part of Andreopoulos' agenda as a translator. In order to stress similarities and to customize novelties, he goes on to define the individual tales narrated by the main characters as fables and parabolic speeches, alluding to their educational content and paradigmatic function. He then refers to the prince's interpretation of the Ten [Ethical] Chapters of Syntipas' teaching as exegetical, and to the prince's answers to his father's question as "life-improving".[38] All these emphasise the instructive nature of the book, and show Andreopoulos' concern to shape expectations among his audiences by employing a meta-language pertinent to Byzantine literary poetics.[39]

As well as making note of the literary encoding that Andreopoulos undertakes, we should also acknowledge that the ideas of exoticism, eroticism, phantasy and the grotesque that permeate the BSP seem at odds with the conservative tastes and pious sentiments embedded in Byzantine reading culture. It is, of course, equally important to stress that these motifs were not entirely unknown to middle Byzantine reading audiences, and that, in addition to their presence in secular literature, such as animal stories, and the accounts of exploits of Alexander, Aesop, and, later on, Digenis, they could be found in the most edifying of all Byzantine literary genres: in hagiography.[40] Therefore, the simultaneous presence of seemingly dissonant conceptual elements, moralising and irreverent, familiar and strange, is both clear and clearly attested in Byzantine religious and secular writing, but the purpose and significance of these features still awaits further elucidation.

In the case of the BSP, the arrangement and interplay of contrasting ideas can be better understood in the context of its complex textual architecture. The BSP has already attracted some attention in the modern scholarship for its merits as an exemplary model of a fully developed and completely organic

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generic category has been re-assessed and challenged by Günter Prinzing in his review of Odorico's volume in *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 65 (2015), 266–9.

38 *Liber Syntipae*, pp. 129, 14–130, 3: Τέλος [...] λεπτομεροῦς διηγήσεως. ἧς αἱ παραβολικαὶ ὁμιλίαι ιδ', τῆς γυναικὸς σὺν τῷ μύθῳ τῆς ἀλώπεκος σ', τοῦ παιδὸς σὺν τῇ ἐξηγήσει τῶν δέκα κεφαλαίων, ὧν ἐδιδάχθη, καὶ ταῖς βιωφελέσι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ ἀποκρίσεσιν ὁμιλίαι ς', καὶ τοῦ Συντίπα μία˙ πάντων ἐξηγήσεις κζ' (The end of the elaborate story [featuring] 14 parabolic speeches [by the philosophers], six by the woman including the fable of the fox, six by the boy including his interpretation of the Ten Chapters, in which he was instructed, and his life-improving answers to his father, and one by Syntipas: all together 27 discourses).

39 Toth, "Authorship and Authority", pp. 97–98.

40 See above, note 25.

frame-story.[41] Moreover, the framing space of the BSP has been identified as particularly significant for the display of paratextual programmatic ideas, and theories of literary authority that it includes. These have been integrated in the book epigram, the title page, the preface, and the synopsis, in other words, in the liminal space of the text, where any representation of reality can be brought in touch with the realm of fiction, without blurring the distinction between the two.[42]

The same holds true of the stories about the protagonists, and of the stories told by the protagonists, which are themselves tightly framed by formulaic opening lines and well-defined parenetic conclusions. All of this works together to enhance the impression of temporal, spatial and thematic stratigraphy within the book as a whole, as well as providing a threshold for the passage from the real(istic) to the fantastic. The overall plot of the BSP hinges on the precisely measured passage of time and metadiegetic synchronisation across all narrative strata. Within the overarching compositional arrangement, the coexistence of different, even opposing, concepts operates on the level of antithesis – the most effective of rhetorical tools – by way of juxtaposing the realms of the familiar and the alien, and then allowing the much-emphasised educational elements of the book emerge against the backdrop of its unconventional content. This literary device is most certainly didactic, but it comes with the additional benefit of allowing the BSP to be read strategically, used for both edification and delectation, and thus enjoyed in all its captivating complexity.

The Books of Greek *Syntipas*

In his epigram, Michael Andreopoulos declares that he has translated the *Book of Syntipas* from Syriac into Greek, and that he has also written it in his own hand.[43] Further on, he reports that the opening lines of the BSP follow the prototype or *antibolaion* of the Syriac story.[44] Some of the questions to which the

41 On the frame structure of Syntipas-Story, see: Perry, "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", 17; Kechagioglou, "Translations of Eastern 'Novels'", pp. 158–59.

42 Toth, "Authorship and Authority", pp. 95–97.

43 *Liber Syntipae*, p. 1, ll. 5–7: ἣν καὶ συρικοῖς τοῖς λόγοις γεγραμμένην / εἲς τὴν παροῦσαν αὐτὸς ἑλλάδα φράσιν / μετήγαγόν τε καὶ γέγραφα τὴν βίβλον (I have translated the book, originally written in Syriac, into the Greek that you see before you, and have also written it in my own hand').

44 See above, note 10. Both these terms have specific meaning in the field of Byzantine textual criticism. They denote 'original' and 'the exact copy of the original' respectively, and

modern scholarship has not yet provided definitive answers concern the relationship between Andreopoulos' translation and the earliest surviving Syriac version of the BSP, and, related to that, their respective relationship to their presumed common, Syriac source.[45] The unsolved problem of the priority of either of the extant versions vis-à-vis their common archetype would have to be reconsidered in the light of the significant progress that has been made in the study of the processes of the transmission of texts in the Middle Ages. A particular desideratum in this area would be to reassess the manuscript history of the BSP on the basis of our much better knowledge of the open and delayed transmission of Byzantine texts, which was not fully explored, nor understood, in the pioneering work of the scholars like Nöldeke, Jernstedt and Perry, on whose conclusions we nonetheless still rely.[46]

When reflecting on the individual merits of the Greek versions of the BSP, it is particularly important to underline what the work of the first translator of this text, Michael Andreopoulos, actually accomplishes. Overall, Andreopoulos seems to have stayed faithful to his textual source without exceeding the limits of a literal, interlingual, translation. Although sensitive to the needs and enjoyment of his contemporary readers, his method is not likely to have involved a great deal of creative rewriting such as we find in the case of, for example, the so-called Eugenian version of *Stephanites and Ichnelates*.[47] Whereas it seems more likely that the elaborate narrative that Andreopoulos produced reflected the nature of his exemplar than his effort to embellish his Syriac source material,[48] we should also exercise caution in our appraisal of the translator's work on the sole basis of his own words. In spite of his demonstrated taste for self-disclosure, and his penchant for the use of paratextual literary poetics, Andreopoulos might have simply decided to omit any details of his editorial work, much the same as the anonymous editor of the Eugenian *Stephanites and Ichnelates* in his own book epigram, in which he makes no reference

must have been strategically chosen to convey the idea of strict adherence to the source: cf. Toth, "Authorship and Authority", p. 93 and note 9.

45 Given the fragmentary state of the Syriac text, and the fact that neither the Persian/Arabic original, nor the Syriac intermediary from which the extant Syriac and Greek versions of BSP descend, have survived, we can be certain only that the 11th-century translation by Michael Andreopoulos represents the oldest *fully-preserved* witness of the earliest known eastern tradition: see the chapter by B. Krönung in this volume, p. 367.

46 Perry, "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", p. 61; *Liber Syntipae*, (ed. Nikitin, *Praefatio*), pp. iv–ix; Nöldeke, "Review".

47 For the discussion of the nature of editorial work involved in the production of this version, see: Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung und Rezeption,* pp. 126–35.

48 As proposed in Nöldeke, "Review", pp. 513–14.

whatsoever to what we now know was his substantial revision of this book.[49] At any rate, Andreopoulos' work, exemplary as it was, might have necessitated a further revision of the BSP. And, indeed, there exists an unattributed Byzantine "paraphrase of the original translation made a hundred years or more after the time of Andreopoulos",[50] which shows substantial morphological, syntactical, lexical and stylistic variations – but no major structural changes – and suggests a wider target readership as well as a likely shift in their expectations, learning and literary taste.[51]

The two Byzantine versions represent two successive stages in the evolution of this work from a more-or-less faithful rendition of a piece of eastern literature to a more idiomatic narrative, more comfortably situated within the range of the written norms of the period.[52] The absence of some of the verbose descriptions, repetitions, anachronisms and inconsistencies that are still present in Andreopoulos' text, undoubtedly made the other version more accessible to a wider public. The earliest manuscript material of the BSP is not coeval with the time of Andreopoulos' translation but significantly delayed, dating only from the 14th century. However, what survives is revealing enough to suggest that the late Byzantine reading audiences continued to show interest in both Greek versions of the BSP, while favouring the more idiomatic revision, which eventually found itself integrated into the canon of popular literature, in Byzantium and beyond.

The translation of the BSP by Michael Andreopoulos in the 11th century marked the starting point of a Greek tradition that carried on for a considerable time, producing a series of gradual modifications, whose linguistic ranges spanned from the middle-register Byzantine *koinē* to several more liberal renditions of the story into modern Greek. All of these were reasonably popular: they survive in some 25 manuscripts dating to the time between the 14th and

49 For the text of the epigram, see: Jamison, *Admiral Eugenius of Sicily*, p. 18.

50 Perry, "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", p. 59. However, there is no consensus about the date of the 'paraphrase': Kechagioglou, "Ο βυζαντινός και μεταβυζαντινός Συντίπας", p. 108.

51 'Paraphrase', 'metaphrase', 'rewriting' may all be used to describe the changes that the BSP underwent in the later version. Any future considerations of this question would benefit from the survey of the terminology and practices of rewriting discussed in: Signes Codoñer, "Towards a vocabulary for rewriting in Byzantium".

52 The discrepancies between the Byzantine versions merit a further investigation to confirm if Andreopoulos' or even another version may have served as the source of the later revision. On the major differences between the two Byzantine versions of the BSP, see: *Liber Syntipae* (ed. Nikitin), pp. ix–xv; Toth, "The Byzantine Translation(s) of the Book of the Philosopher Syntipas" (forthcoming).

the 17th centuries.[53] It was, however, the post-Byzantine diffusion of the BSP that made this text one of the most successful and most widely read European Volksbücher.[54] Its printed Greek editions in particular had an impressively long run and wide circulation, as did their 18th- and 19th-century translations into Romanian, Bulgarian and Serbian. Taken together, they make this book a true bestseller of early modern times, and a real testimony to the longevity and vitality of eastern prose fiction in European literary history.

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53 For the list of manuscripts, see: Perry, "The Origin of the Book of Sindbad", pp. 59–60; Kechagioglou, "Ο βυζαντινός και μεταβιζαντινός Συντίπας", pp. 117–18.

54 Beck, *Geschichte*, pp. 47–8; Kechagioglou, "Ο βυζαντινός και μεταβιζαντινός Συντίπας", pp. 118–21; Adinolfi, "La ricezione in area slavo-balcanica del *Libro di Sindbād*".

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CHAPTER 16

From the Desert to the Holy Mountain: The Beneficial *Story of Barlaam and Ioasaph*

Robert Volk

This tale recounts the story of a king's son who, after being instructed by a pious ascetic himself became a hermit. The story draws on material from the life of Buddha and spread over the world through countless adaptations in several languages, making its way through Buddhism, Manichaeism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity. However, all versions differ from the actual legend of Buddha in one essential respect: they all have not one, but two heroes: Prince Ioasaph and his teacher Barlaam. Their names are built upon what were, in the original story, honorific titles given to one and the same hero, namely prince Gautama Siddharta: Barlaam = Baghavan Lord) and Ioa(d)asaph or Bodasaph = Bodhisattva (future Buddha).[1] The Greek adaptation is viewed as the most learned and refined version of the tale: a number of scholars judged the Byzantine *Barlaam and Ioasaph* as one of the most important pieces of world literature.[2]

The Plot

The setting of this eventful story is India, sometime after the missionary travels of the apostle Thomas there, where vibrant Christian communities, monasteries and hermitages were to be found. However, although Christianity is well established, the ruler, a powerful king by the name of Abenner (Ἀβεννήρ), is still a pagan and a committed idolater. All his desires were fulfilled save one: he was childless. He becomes obsessed with the active persecution of Christians, after one of his most senior court officials and advisers converts and, choosing

1 The initial 'B' is correct, yet the initial 'I' also appears quite early on in Arabic texts; two diacritical dots (يد = 'I') instead of one (بد = 'B') written underneath was the decisive factor for this. Additionally, the *Barlaam* text no longer contains any specific markers of Buddhist doctrine, that is, no indications of agnosticism or even atheism, and nothing of karma or reincarnation.

2 See Grégoire, "Monastère d'Iviron", p. 420; Krumbacher, *Geschichte*, p. 886; Schubart, "Historia Barlaami et Ioasaph", p. 50; Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, p. 1.

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to live as an anchorite, insults him because of his empty, hedonistic lifestyle. The Christians are expelled almost without exception, some are even killed. Shortly afterwards a son is born to the king, who names him Ioasaph (Ἰωάσαφ). Being of the opinion that the gods had been receptive to his sacrifices, Abenner proclaims a great festival in their honor. Among the invited guests are 55 astrologers, the most experienced of whom says that Prince Ioasaph will convert to the Christian faith which his father had persecuted. Subsequently the child is isolated in a palace built expressly for him, and is watched over and raised exclusively by young and beautiful people. He is to be spared any knowledge of the unpleasant sides of life: death, old age, sickness and poverty are explicitly mentioned. Sick attendants are immediately replaced, Ioasaph is to live in the moment and is not to think of the future, above all not of Jesus Christ and his teachings.

Having grown into a young man, the feeling arises in the intelligent prince that he is being held prisoner. A trusted tutor tells him the reasons why, and Ioasaph consequently takes his father to task. His father now allows him to explore the world outside of his golden cage, but secretly creates a Potemkin village; there is music, singing and dancing in the streets, and merry exuberance instead of misery and despondency. Yet the servants are exhausted by the maintenance of this deception, so much so that the utterly flabbergasted Ioasaph one day sees two men, one leprous, the other blind; his keepers are forced to reveal to him the existence of disease (Figure 16.1).

Only a few days later, he catches sight of a hunched, white-haired and toothless old man, and he is once again amazed (Figure 16.2). He learns that this aged man has already reached advanced old age, and has nothing more to expect than for death to take him away, and learns that if death does not already befall a person early in their life, then at 80, or at most at 100 years of age, it is inevitable. How death is explained to Ioasaph is absent from the Greek version, contrary to what one reads in many summaries.[3] Melancholy remains on Ioasaph's mind, but he tells his father nothing of his new experiences.

3 The third meeting with Prince Bodhisattva – namely, the one with a corpse – which is known from the descriptions of the life of Buddha, as well as the explanation of death, are not only absent in the Greek text, but also in its Arabic and Georgian predecessors as well. The frequently printed adaptation by the Catholic priest, and writer of literature for young people, Christoph v. Schmid (1768–1854) filled this gap. Through it the *Barlaam* text, from 1839 onwards, reached a popularity that it is not to be underestimated. This was not only in German-speaking regions, as translations into French, Czech and Swedish are known. In this meeting the prince learns from the invalid old man what death is all about (cf. Schmid, Chr. v., *Josaphat, Königssohn von Indien. Eine Geschichte aus dem christlichen Alterthume, neuerzählt*, Augsburg

FIGURE 16.1 *Codex Par. gr. 1128 (14th century), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,* Barlaam and Joasaph, *fol. 19v: Ioasaph encounters two sick men – one leprous, the other blind.* PHOTO: COURTESY BNF.

FIGURE 16.2 *Codex Par. gr. 1128 (14th century), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,* Barlaam and Joasaph, *fol. 20r: Ioasaph encounters the decrepit hunchbacked man.* PHOTO: COURTESY BNF.

At this time, the hermit Barlaam, informed by divine revelation of Ioasaph's search for guidance, makes his way from a distant desert to India. Dressed as a merchant wanting to show the prince an exceptional gem, he is allowed to

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1839 [now digitalized by Google-Books], pp. 9–10). Additionally, the introduction of a vanished playmate of the prince, who had been his same age, represents a particular literary device of Schmid. His closest tutor must explain to Josaphat that the boy has died, and that his dead body is already turning to dust (cf. Schmid, ibid., p. 13).

enter the palace. In order to convince himself that Ioasaph is worthy of the stone, he tells him the New Testament parable of the sower,[4] during which it becomes clear that the hermit has no stone to offer him, but rather a religious doctrine, to which Ioasaph is favorably disposed.

Through Barlaam's instruction – often in the form of actual Indian, or at least oriental, parables, which are interpreted in a Christian way[5] – Ioasaph recognizes his inner calling and converts to Christianity. Sometime after Barlaam's departure, the king learns of this and with all his might he attempts to reclaim his son from the new faith. The royal advisors suggest that soldiers pursue Baarlam, seize him, and then via persuasion or torture, force him to renounce his teaching as a lie and error. If he cannot be tracked down, then the astrologer Nachor, who also lives as a hermit and looks like Barlaam, is to take on his role and allow himself to be defeated by polytheistic priests in a staged religious dialogue. In fact Barlaam evades capture – a group of 17 monks who knew him are taken into custody, but do not disclose his dwelling and are tortured to death – and as a result Nachor appears as a Pseudo-Barlaam. As the rumor of Baarlam's captivity is spread throughout the entire city, the appalled Prince Ioasaph learns from a dream the true state of affairs, and can calmly look forward to the religious dispute, as well as joining in a discussion on faith with his father. During the religious dispute, the astrologer Nachor, as the false

4 This is found in the oldest surviving form of the *Barlaam* text, the Arabic-Ismaelite *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būḏāsf* (see below, p. 410); cf. in the French translation of Gimaret, *Le livre de Bilawhar et Būḏāsf*, pp. 86.34–87.22 as well as Lienhard, "Vom arabischen Buch «Bilawhar wa Būḏāsf» zum byzantinischen «Barlaam und Joasaph»", pp. 498–500.

5 Of genuine Indian origin is the tale of the 'Man in the Well' (ed. Volk 12,215–256 [pp. 127–30]). Older than any written document, it is attested on a Buddhist rock relief of the 2nd century AD, cf. Mette, A. (ed.), *Die Erlösungslehre der Jaina. Legenden, Parabeln, Erzählungen. Aus dem Sanskrit und Prakrit übersetzt*, Berlin 2010, pp. 402–03 and fig. 13, and Toumpouri, "L'homme chassé", pp. 427–29 and 438. One encounters its, probably complete, reworking in the Jain influenced introductory chapter (6th–7th centuries AD) of the 'Vasudevahiṇḍi' of Saṅghadāsa (cf. Mette, ibid., pp. 68–69 and 319–23). In Byzantium this led to its depiction in images, which Manuel Philes (13th–14th centuries) described in six poems (cf. Manuel Philes, *Carmina*, ed. E. Miller, 2 vols., Paris 1855–57 (repr. Amsterdam 1967), vol. 1, pp. 126–29 [= carm. 246 and 248–52]). The Cretan poet Mpergades (15th century) also used the motif in his vernacular book *Apokopos*, which belongs to the genre of journeys to Hades (ed. P. Vejleskov, *Apokopos. A fifteenth century Greek* [*Veneto-Cretan*] *catabasis in the vernacular. Synoptic edition with an introduction, commentary and Index verborum. English translation by M. Alexiou* [Neograeca Medii Aevi, 9], Cologne 2005, pp. 184–87 [verses 1–66]). It had earlier already become a motif in figurative art, for instance in Italy, seen on the baptistery in Parma from around 1200; cf. Toumpouri, "L'homme chassé", pp. 431–32 and Siclari, "L'apologo del Barlaam e Joasaph", pp. 351–73.

Barlaam, guided by the Holy Spirit, embarks upon a spirited defense of Christianity, after he highlights the errors and absurdities of venerating the elements and Greek and Egyptian gods; Judaism is briefly touched upon as well.[6]

The plan of the royal advisors fails, and Ioasaph can in the end fully convert Nachor to Christianity, who had spoken as though he were in a trance. Abenner's faith in the pagan gods is shaken as well, and this time it is the priests, who fearing for their sinecures, plan a new attempt to convert Ioasaph back to polytheism. They turn to the magician Theudas, who lives in the deepest wilderness and has at his command a veritable army of evil spirits. He advises the king to at least make generous sacrifices to the gods, which take place in the context of a great feast. For Ioasaph, Theudas has a particular plan in mind: his hitherto male retinue should be replaced entirely by beautiful and seductively dressed women; if he has continuous contact with them, then he will be rapidly mellowed. King Abenner is convinced by the advice of Theudas, and he now has Ioasaph surrounded by young women who try by many means to seduce him, yet in the end they fail because though Ioasaph is affected by these attempts, he has transcended pure corporeal desire. Only when he falls in love with one girl, a foreign princess kept as a hostage at the court of the king, and who is his intellectual equal, does a change appear to take place. The prince can have religious conversations with her (Figure 16.3).

As a pagan keen on conversion, she cites many arguments in favor of marriage from the New Testament: it is the evil spirits of Theudas who speak from her mouth. Ioasaph refuses to marry her because he had promised to remain single for Christ, and his goal is to become a monk. Thereupon the princess asks for a single night with him, after which she will then become a Christian. Ioasaph should consider it, in her opinion, since even this unusual means of converting a sinner is allowed. Ioasaph actually begins to waver, and seeks an answer through prayer. In a dream he finds himself brought by supernatural beings to a wonderful landscape and then to a magnificent city, where a voice announces to him that this is the place of those who please the Lord. Against his will the same supernatural beings lead him further, because he could come

6 Nachor's monologue is, surprisingly, an almost complete copy of the *Apology* of Aristides (2nd century AD), which was originally directed at the emperor Antoninus Pius. Today it is preserved in its entirety only in Syriac, but three papyrus fragments make it clear that the author of the Greek Barlaam had the complete Greek text of the *Apology* at his disposal, and reworked it. The section on Judaism alone is extensively reworked in *Barlaam*, cf. *Barlaam*, ed. Volk, pp. 280–01 (27,234–248), corresponding to Aristides, *Apology*, ed. B. Pouderon/M.-J. Pierre avec la collaboration de B. Outtier, M. Guiorgadzé, *Aristide Apologie. Introduction, textes critiques, traductions et commentaire* (Sources Chrétiennes, 470), Paris 2003, pp. 233–35 (cap. XIV).

FIGURE 16.3 *Codex Par. gr. 1128 (14th century), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,* Barlaam and Joasaph*, fol. 154*v*: Ioasaph in conversation with the foreign princess.*
PHOTO: COURTESY BNF <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8452659r/f569.image>.

and find his rest there only after many toils; and they reach a dark place, in which a furnace glows. Within it burn wailing figures, and worms, created to torment people, crawl about. A voice describes the site as the place of sinners who have sullied themselves with shameful deeds. Waking from this apocalyptic dream, the beauty of the nameless princess appears to Ioasaph as more repulsive than rot and dung. Thus, Theudas' deception remains unsuccessful, and Ioasaph sets out to discuss with him fundamental ethical principles. During the course of the debate, Theudas, well versed in theology, converts, burns his books of sorcery and spends the rest of his days as a Christian ascetic. The royal advisors now recommend a division of the kingdom; the duties and worries of a ruler would soon cure the prince of his, what in their eyes were, otherworldly aspirations. Ioasaph does not object and establishes in his half of the kingdom a flourishing Christian state, that is, he applies the rules and instructions for the conduct of an ideal prince found in an influential mirror of princes of the 6th century.[7] Abenner's half of the kingdom, by contrast, stag-

7 Namely the so called *Scheda regia* by Agapetos Diakonos, addressed to the emperor Justinian. See Agapetos Diakonos, *Der Fürstenspiegel für Kaiser Iustinianos*, ed. R. Riedinger

nates and is rocked by crises. This finally leads to the adoption of Christianity by King Abenner as well; he hands over the entire kingdom to his son and lives four more years as a hermit until his death. He is full of regret and emulates the ascetics he had once cruelly persecuted.

Soon after the death of his father, Ioasaph hands over his rule to the faithful servant Barachias, who is also a Christian, and begins to search for his master and teacher Barlaam. He searches for him for a long time, in the process overcoming many attacks by the devil and physical unpleasantries. After they finally meet they live together for years, and Ioasaph soon surpasses the astonished Barlaam in asceticism. Barlaam spends 75 years in the desert and reaches the age of about 100, passes away and is buried by Ioasaph. In a dream-like vision at his grave, Ioasaph recognizes Baarlam as an inhabitant of the magnificent city he had once seen. He continues to live as an ascetic in the desert and dies around the age of 60. Another hermit, who knew the hour of Ioasaph's death through divine revelation, buries him in Baarlam's grave and goes to the Indian king Barachias. The shared grave of Barlaam and Ioasaph is opened, and both corpses prove to have not decomposed, and even produce a wonderful fragrant odor. They are solemnly led to the Indian capital and interred there. Many miracles occur at their tomb, and in view of these signs many inhabitants of neighboring lands also convert to the Christian faith.

A The Eastern and Georgian Tradition

1 *The Origin of the Text: Research History*

Finding a definitive solution to the problem of the origin of the Greek *Barlaam* romance was a long journey from 19th–21st centuries. The political situation, including numerous regional conflicts and two world wars, reduced research and international contacts, and led to substantial delays in progress. The Munich-based Byzantinist Franz Dölger (1891–1968) argued in 1943 that the *Barlaam* romance was composed by the Georgian monk Euthymios at the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos, on the basis of the Georgian original.[8] This was after Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1885–1963), his colleague in Christian Oriental Studies, had favorably reviewed, in 1933,[9] the pioneering study of Paul

(Ἑταιρεία Φίλων τοῦ Λαοῦ. Κέντρον Ἐρεύνης Βυζαντίου, 4), Athens 1995, or, Agapito Diacono, *Scheda regia*, ed. F. Iadevaia, Messina 1995.

8 Cf. Dölger, F. (ed.), *Mönchsland Athos*, Munich 1943, p. 50.

9 See the short review on Peeters article by W. Hengstenberg, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 33 (1933), p. 162.

Peeters (1870–1950) on this question.[10] Things changed immediately after the Second World War, when Dölger created a glossary of the writings of John of Damascus at the Byzantine Institute of Scheyern Abbey (*c.*50 km north of Munich). He also incorporated the *Barlaam* romance, which, according to a centuries-old tradition, was ascribed to the Church father John of Damascus, who had died before 754 at the Mar Saba Monastery near Jerusalem. Dölger was certainly justified in doing that, because the Euthymios theory was still not widely accepted, having been already disputed in 1886 by Hermann Zotenberg (1836–1909).[11] The latter, however, also questioned the authorship of John of Damascus. The quotations from John of Damascus in the *Barlaam* romance, already recognized in 1577 by Jacques de Billy, Zotenberg considered to be meaningless,[12] and instead constructed a somewhat fanciful theory of his own, which saw the *Barlaam* romance as the work of another John, a monk of Mar Saba from the 7th century.[13] Krumbacher's book on the history of literature, for example, transmitted this theory,[14] and it had an effect for some time afterward.[15] The result of Dölger's word index surprised the academic world, because he vehemently defended the conclusion that John of Damascus, after all, was in fact the author of our edifying tale. This was because he identified the monk John from the Mar Saba Monastery in the title, as John of Damascus, mainly because of the numerous verbatim borrowings from John's dogmatic writings in the text.[16] In addition, Dölger gave particular weight to the Arabic *Vita* of John of Damascus, composed in 1085 in Antioch, according to which, of the few primary works named within it "is the story of Barlaam and Josaphat, where he shows all human and divine wisdom."[17] Until quite recently one could have dismissed this sentence in the Arabic *Vita* of John of Damascus as a suspected interpolation in one of the few manuscripts of the *edito princeps*,[18] which has virtually no critical apparatus. In the meantime, it has become

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10 Peeters, "Première traduction".

11 Cf. Zotenberg, *Notice*, pp. 7–10, summarized in Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 52–58.

12 Cf. Zotenberg, *Notice* p. 14.

13 Cf. Zotenberg, *Notice* p. 77.

14 Cf. Krumbacher, *Geschichte*, p. 886–91.

15 Cf. Bees (Βέης), "Geschichtliche Forschungsresultate", pp. 399–400.

16 Cf. Dölger, *Barlaam-Roman*. This book was completed in 1948 and had to wait five years to be printed. For reactions to it, and Dölger's and H.-G. Beck's opinion in favor of John of Damascus, see Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 49–54.

17 Portillo, "The Arabic Life of St. John of Damascus", p. 184.

18 Vita Ioannis Damasceni arab., ed. C. Bacha, *Biographie de saint Jean Damascène, texte original arabe, publié par la première fois*, Ḥarīṣa 1912.

certain that this excerpt is in fact a genuine part of the text, and is found in all the textual witnesses of the first critical edition, which is currently being prepared in Munich.[19] It thus appears that the earliest attribution of the *Barlaam* romance to John of Damascus – whatever the reasons might have been – originated neither in the Latin West nor in Byzantium, but rather in the Near East.

The argument both of Zotenberg and Dölger however, disregards completely the problems of the chronology and history of the text. There is, for example, no indication at all that the *Barlaam* text – which, as mentioned above, contains substantial elements from the life of Buddha – was known in the 7th or middle of the 8th century in Syria and Palestine. The view of David Marshall Lang (1924–91), Professor of Caucasian Studies in London, is that: "Dölger's monograph represents an attempt to reinstate Barlaam in the Damascene canon, with a view to including this important work in the Scheyern edition."[20] Even if this issue was not the foremost concern of Dölger, his influence on scholarly opinion was so great, above all in German-speaking areas and in Greece, that the first critical edition of the Greek *Barlaam* romance appeared between 2006 and 2009 as the sixth volume (divided into two half-volumes) of the series *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, edited in Scheyern. It was, however, clearly designated as a spurious, pseudo-epigraphic work.

2 *The Arabic-Oriental Tradition*

The *Fihrist* (Catalogue) of Ibn an-Nadīm († 995 or 998 AD), published in Baghdad around 938, was, according to its short introduction, an index of all books written in Arabic, regardless of whether their authors had been Arab or had merely written in Arabic. In six of its 10 sections there appear books about Buddha or Bodhisattva.[21] They were translated between 767 and 815 from

19 For this helpful remark I would like to warmly thank here my colleague Eva Ambros.

20 Lang, "St. Euthymius the Georgian and the Barlaam and Ioasaph romance", p. 309.

21 Cf. Flügel, G. † (ed.), *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, vol. 2: *Die Anmerkungen und Indices enthaltend*, von A. Müller, Leipzig 1872, p. 274: it concerns pages 18 (Part 1: A Description of the Books of the Arabs and non-Arabs, their letters and their revealed books), 119 (Part 3: Works on History, Biographies, Mirrors for Princes and Genealogy), 163 (Part 4: Pre-Islamic and Islamic Poets, their Works and their Biographies), 305 (Part 8: Legends, Fables, Magic and the Like), 345–47 (Part 9: The Teachings of Non-Monotheistic Sects [Manicheans, Hindus, Buddhists and the Adherents of Chinese Religions]) and 352 (Part 10: Alchemy) of the purely Arabic text volume Flügel, G. † (ed.), *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, vol. 1: *Den Text enthaltend*, von J. Roediger, Leipzig 1871. The descriptions of the parts of the *Fihrist* are taken from the German Wikipedia article "Ibn an-Nadīm") (as of April 15, 2013).

Middle Persian (Pahlavi). Among them the *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būḏāsf*[22] leads more or less directly to the Arabic-Ismaelite work of the same title, which was first printed in 1888/89 in Bombay,[23] and was critically edited in 1972 by D. Gimaret.[24] That this work already existed long before the composition of the *Fihrist* proves its reworking in verse (now lost) by Ābān b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Lāḥīqī, a poet who died around 815 AD, who also revamped such well-known works such as *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and *Sindbād.*[25]

There also exist certain Islamic reworkings of the *Barlaam* text which the *Fihrist* does not list; they are possibly earlier than this great index, but they are known through manuscripts located in western libraries. This is the case with an abbreviated version of the Ismaelite *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būḏāsf*, contained in Cod. I.g.9 (1687/88 AD), pages 4–58, of the Library of the Morgenländische Gesellschaft, in Halle.[26] The two main protagonists do not appear in the title, which in Rehatsek's translation appears as "This is an abridgment from the book of one of the distinguished philosophers of India. It is a book of eloquent allusions, pleasing instructions, and beautiful meanings [or ideas]." No proper names appear, with the exception of Bilawhar (nine times in total), who is generally described as *an-nāsik* (= ascetic); Būḏāsf appears throughout as *ibn al-malik* (= son of the king). The text breaks off due to the loss of several leaves at the point where the decision is made to pursue the departed Bilawhar (Barlaam) with soldiers.

A somewhat different strand of the Arabic tradition is revealed in the theological work *Kitāb ikmāl ad-dīn wa itmām an-ni'ma fī iṯbāt al-ġayba wa kašf al-ḥayra* (The perfection of the religion and the end of the blessings), by the Shiite sheik Abū Ǧaʿfar b. Bābūya al-Qummī aṣ-Ṣadūq (commonly known in English as Ibn Babawayh, † 991 AD). Even though it is dependent on the plot of *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būḏāsf*, it contains three parables, absent in that text, con-

22 Cf. Flügel (s. n. 21), vol. 1, p. 305.

23 Russian translation: Rozen, V.R., *Povest' o Varlaame pustynnike i Iosafe* [*sic*] *tsareviche indijskom. Perevod s arabskogo pod redaktsiej i s vvedeniem I.Yu. Krachkovskogo*, Moscow – Leningrad 1947. French translation: Gimaret, *Le livre de Bilawhar et Būdāsf.*

24 Gimaret, *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būḏāsf.*

25 Cf. Gimaret, *Le livre de Bilawhar et Būdāsf*, pp. 35–36. On the latter see as well the contributions by B. Krönung in this volume.

26 Cf. Gimaret, *Le livre de Bilawhar et Būdāsf*, pp. 25–27. Edition: Hommel, F. (ed.), "Die älteste arabische Barlaam-Version", *Verhandlungen des 7. Internationalen Orientalisten-Congresses, Wien 1886. Semitische Section*, Vienna 1888, pp. 115–65. English translation: Rehatsek, E., "Book of the king's son and the ascetic", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, New Series* 22 (1890), 119–55.

cerning the conversion of kings or sons of kings who are confronted by their caducity.[27]

Even by the time the Georgian *Barlaam* had long since developed from the *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būḏāsf*, and the Greek *Barlaam* from the Georgian (s. below), this Arabic-Ismaelite text still had some influence. In the very late 14th century a Persian version was completed by Niẓām ad-dīn Šāmī, preserved, amongst others, in an autographed manuscript in London.[28] Earlier, in the 13th century, Abraham B. Ḥasdāy († 1240) composed the Hebrew version of the *Barlaam* text based on it, entitled *Ben ham-meleḵ we-han-nazīr* (Prince and Dervish).[29] The latter is even more remarkable because the Arabic *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būḏāṣf* belonged to the religious literature of a small Shiite minority with radical tendencies (the Ismaelites), and had therefore only a marginal importance within the canon of Islamic Arabic (thus Sunni) literature.[30] Yet, the creation of a Hebrew version in Barcelona demonstrates that this heterodox text was known even in Sunni Spain.[31] Significantly, earlier than this it served, as already stated, as a base text for the Georgian version of *Barlaam*, through which this originally Buddhist story found its way into Christendom.

3 *The Georgian Tradition*

Little was known of Georgian literature in the West when Zotenberg presented both Greek manuscripts of the *Barlaam* romance, which describe the work as a translation from Georgian, undertaken by the Georgian monk Euthymios at Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain.[32] He refused to accept this claim as he could not believe that the Georgian language could have produced a work like the *Barlaam* romance hundreds of years ago.[33] Even when Dölger had once again accepted Euthymios' authorship over 60 years later, and even argued for it

27 These specific parables are edited and translated into English in S.M. Stern/S. Walzer (ed.), *Three unknown Buddhist stories in an Arabic version. Introduction, text and translation*, Oxford 1971.

28 Cf. Gimaret, *Le livre de Bilawhar et Būdāsf*, pp. 43–47.

29 Cf. Gimaret, *Le livre de Bilawhar et Būdāsf*, pp. 47–50 and Cordoni, *Barlaam und Josaphat*, pp. 19–22. Edition: A.M. Haberman (ed.), *Ben ham-meleḵ we-han-nazīr*, Tel Aviv 1950. The only reliable and annotated translation in a European language is in Catalan: Calders i Artís, T. (trans.), *El príncep i el monjo d'Abraham ben Šemuel ha-Levi ibn Ḥasday* (Orientalia Barcinonensia, 2), Sabadell 1987.

30 Niehoff-Panagiotidis, Übersetzung und Rezeption, pp. 173–74.

31 Ibid., pp. 185–86.

32 Cf. Zotenberg, *Notice*, p. 7. See also below, pp. 417–19.

33 Cf. Zotenberg, *Notice*, p. 9.

more strongly,[34] the argument, in reality, had not become generally accepted. This is because the passage at the end of the prologue of the Georgian *Vita* of Saint John and his son Saint Euthymios, composed by Giorgi Mtʻacʼmideli (George the Hagiorite, † 1066) around 1044/45, and published in Russian in 1886, was not known to Zotenberg at the time. According to this passage, Euthymios not only translated many books from Greek into Georgian, but also some from Georgian into Greek, among them the *Balahvari* and the *Abukura*.[35] In a review of Zotenberg's study in 1887/88, Baron Viktor Romanovich Rozen (1849–1908) published the passage from the *Vita* and made it accessible for scholars of oriental and Byzantine literature. Moreover, in combination with the two manuscripts named by Zotenberg, he was the first to argue for Euthymios' authorship of the *Barlaam* text.[36] Immediately afterwards, this new theory gained traction with the discovery of what we now know to be an abbreviated Georgian version, named *Sibrdzne Balahvarisi* (The Wisdom of Balahvar) in a manuscript located in Georgia. It was first mentioned in 1885 in a Georgian pamphlet;[37] in 1888/89 Nikolaj Jakovlevich Marr (1865–1934) made it known to the international scholarly community.[38] It was completely printed first in 1895 in Georgian,[39] and in 1899 its Russian translation was published.[40]

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34 Cf. Dölger, *Barlaam-Roman*, p. 29 and Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, p. 27 with n. 119.

35 Cf. Tsagareli, A.A., *Svedenija o pamjatnikakh gruzinskoj pis'mennosti* [Information on the monuments of Georgian literature], vyp. 1, Sankt-Petersburg 1886, pp. 53–54, on the basis of the first edition of this *Vita* (1882) according to an originally Athonite manuscript of 1074. The current standard edition of I. Abuladze (Tbilisi 1967) is founded on nine manuscripts in total; it is the basis for the annotated French translation of Martin-Hisard, "La Vie de Jean et Euthyme"; the passage in question is on p. 86, lines 71–74.

36 Cf. *Zapiski Vostochnago Otdelenija imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obschestva* 2 (1887, printed 1888), pp. 166–74, especially pp. 172–74.

37 Cf. Kuhn, *Barlaam und Joasaph*, p. 10.

38 Cf. Marr, N., "Mudrost' Balavara, gruzinskaja versija dushepoleznoj istorii o Varlaame i Ioasafe" [The Wisdom of Balahvar, a Georgian version of the edifying history of Barlaam and Ioasaph], *Zapiski Vostochnago Otdelenija imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obschestva* 3 (1888, printed 1889), pp. 223–60.

39 By E. Taqayshvili, Tbilisi 1895. For the current standard edition, based on six partially fragmentary manuscripts of 12th/13th–18th centuries, see below, n. 48.

40 Dzhavakhov, I., "Mudrost' Balavara", *Zapiski Vostochnago Otdelenija imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obschestva* 11 (1897–1898, printed 1899), pp. 1–48. This translation has remained the standard one in Russia, although better editions of the Georgian text were later produced; it was reprinted under the Georgian name of the translator I.A. Dzhavakhishvili in Abuladze, I.V. (trans.), *Balavariani. Mudrost' Balavara*, Tbilisi 1962, pp. 115–53.

Disillusionment quickly set in, because the *Sibrdzne Balahvarisi* is clearly shorter than the Arabic-Ismaelite and the Greek text, thus it does not contain much of what is found in these two versions, and far fewer characters appear. Such problems caused the Euthymios theory to be continually viewed with skepticism.

In the course of cataloguing the Georgian manuscripts of the Jerusalem Patriarchal Library in the 1920s, Codex 140 was discovered there. According to Blake's description, it contained the *Sibrdzne Balahvarisi* in fol. 1r-85r[41] and, in fol. 85v-170r, an evidently unknown text of the same length, entitled "Vie et efforts du bienheureux Iodasapʿ, le fils du roi, que le saint Balahvar convertit, et qui convertit son père, le roi Abenes et le pays de l'Inde au service du Christ."[42] Paul Peeters was full of expectation,[43] yet was not able to check, in 1931, on the basis of photographs, Blake's interesting evidence in his article, in which he introduced the newly-discovered Latin translation of the *Barlaam* romance (BHL 979b).[44] This text was written in Constantinople in 1048, and its title mentions a translation made from Georgian into Greek by Euthymios. That a fatal, though rather welcome error of Blake was to blame, first emerged in 1957, when it was discovered on the basis of the now-microfilmed manuscript, that it contained, in folia 1–172, exclusively a single, hitherto unknown long Georgian *Barlaam* text, divided into three books. Its title in English translation is the: *Life and acts of the blessed Iodasapʿ, son of Abenes, king of the Indians, whom the blessed father Balahvar the teacher converted*,[45] which is today usually known as the *Balavariani*.[46] Without a doubt this *Balavariani*[47] (for those who can

41 English translation: Lang (trans.), *The Wisdom of Balahvar*. French translation: Mahé (trans.), *La sagesse de Balahvar*.

42 Blake, R.P., "Catalogue des manuscrits géorgiens de la Bibliothèque patriarcale grecque à Jerusalem", *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 25 (1925–26), p. 141.

43 Cf. Peeters, "Première traduction", p. 301.

44 It survives to this day in Cod. Neapol. B.N. VIII.B.10 (14th century), fol. 416v-502v. In 1532, it apparently still existed as an independent codex in Monte Cassino, cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, p. 495 with n. 362. Edition: J. Martínez Gázquez (ed.), *Hystoria Barlae et Iosaphat* (*Bibl. Nacional de Nápoles VIII.B.10*). *Estudio y edición* (Nueva Roma, 5), Madrid 1997.

45 Cf. Lang, "The Life of the Blessed Iodasaph", p. 394.

46 This catchy title is not attested in manuscripts, it was propagated by Georgian researchers in the second half of the 20th century, above all Ilia Abuladze; cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, p. 98 with n. 6.

47 Unfortunately it is not quite complete: in the manuscript a leaf has fallen out between folios 35 and 36; for this gap in the text of the parable of the man with three friends – corresponding to, approx., 13.9–39 (ed. Volk) of the Greek text – Lang relied in his translation on the Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būdāsf, the Georgian short version and the Greek *Barlaam*

read Georgian it is edited synoptically with the abbreviated version *Sibrdzne Balahvarisi*[48]), is the link between the Arabic-Ismaelite *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būḏāsf* and the Greek *Barlaam* romance. It is currently only found in a single manuscript – incidentally from the 11th century and not from the 13th–14th, as stated in Blake's catalogue – which, in addition, is the first Christian version of the text. That its template was Arabic is not at all surprising. Georgia was for centuries in close contact with the Caliphate, and was also partially under Islamic rule; the capital Tbilisi was, from 655 to 1122, under the administration of an Arab emir. The Georgian noblemen, although they were Christian, adopted Arabic names. Even among the close relations of Euthymios the Athonite, this was the case. His father, who later adopted the monastic name John, was originally named Abulherit, and an uncle was named Abuharb.[49]

B The Byzantine Tradition

The Greek *Barlaam* romance, in contrast to the unique Georgian exemplar, is quite often transmitted in manuscripts. At the time of the publication of the introductory volume for the critical edition of R. Volk, 219 textual witnesses were known.[50] However, these differ markedly with regard to their coverage, ranging from a complete codex to small fragments: such as a quarter of vellum leaf (11th century)[51] or a small strip of paper glued within a codex (14th–15th centuries),[52] on which a somewhat unusual title of the work is noted. In the

romance; cf. Lang (trans.), *Balavariani*, pp. 78–9 with n. 1. For the loss of two leaves between folia 57 and 58, Lang used in this spot the identical text of *Sibrdzne Balahvarisi* (cf. ibid. pp. 98–9 with n. 1).

48 I. Abuladze (ed.), *Balavarianis k'art'uli redak'c'iebi, gamosc'a gamok'vleva da lek'sik'oni daurt'o* [The Georgian redactions of the Barlaam story, edited with a research report and a lexicon] (Dzveli k'art'uli enis dzeglebi, 10), Tbilisi 1957. On the basis of this edition Tarchnišvili, "Les deux recensions du «Barlaam» géorgien", pp. 67–72 clearly presents the similarities and differences of both texts. English translation: Lang (trans.), *Balavariani*. Russian translation: Abuladze, I.V. (trans.), *Balavariani. Mudrost' Balavara*, Tbilisi 1962, pp. 1–112.

49 On the family of Euthymios cf. J. Lefort/N. Oikonomidès/D. Papachryssanthou (eds.) avec la collaboration d'H. Métrévéli, *Actes d'Iviron I: Des origines au milieu du XIe siècle. Édition diplomatique. Texte* (Archives de l'Athos, 14,1), Paris 1985, pp. 4–17 passim.

50 Cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 240–495.

51 Part of a miscellany from Asia Minor once located in Berlin, now in Cracow, cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 340–42.

52 On fol. 1v of Cod. OeW Cod. I.1.2°1 of the Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg, cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 293–94.

meantime, the number of textual witnesses has increased further to 221; more were found in the lower layers of two palimpsest fragments in Italy.[53]

Just as Arabisms have been discovered in the *Balavariani*, Georgian experts have also come upon different passages in the Byzantine *Barlaam* text that could only have arisen from a Georgian template. The most notable is, from the perspective of content, the nonsensical Greek sentence: "Σήμερον γὰρ βρώμασιν ἡδέοις τὸν φάρυγγα αὐτῶν καταλεάνας, κατάβρωμα τοῖς *ἐχθροῖς* ὅλους αὐτοὺς αὔριον τίθησι"[54] (Today it tickleth their gullet with pleasant dainties; tomorrow it maketh them nought but a gobbet for their enemies[55]). Who are these 'enemies' who appear in all Greek textual witnesses without any variation? The corresponding passage of the *Balavariani*, where this passage on the transience of temporal happiness has its origin, yields an explanation: "Today it prepares the gourmet a sumptuous banquet, and tomorrow it turns him over as food for the *worms*."[56] The Georgian expressions 'for the worms' (mat'lt'a) and 'for the enemies' (mt'ert'a) are relatively similar. The translator of the *Balavariani* probably found the word abbreviated to mt't'a in his manuscript, possibly at the end of a line, so that this false interpretation could arise.

If one were to assume that the Greek text arose first in the 10th century, then citations and figures of speech must appear which were unknown to John of Damascus. In fact this is the case: repeatedly cited as examples in the text are not the authentic homilies of John Chrysostom, but rather the more compact selections compiled by high-ranking official Theodore Daphnopates († ca. 961/963).[57] Also, the dozens of parallels between the *Barlaam* romance and the works of the famous hagiographer and historian Symeon Metaphrastes († ca. 987) would theoretically not exclude the possibility that the author was John of Damascus, if these parallels had been citations from the *Barlaam* romance in Metaphrastes' texts.[58] According to Johannes Grossmann, however, these passages are borrowings of the *Barlaam* author from the metaphrastic *Menologion* (collection of lives of saints for the twelve months of the year),[59] and they

53 On Cod. Laur. plut. 57,36, fols. 100, 103–104 and 106 cf. Arnesano/Baldi, "Il palinsesto Laur. plut. 57.36", pp. 124–25. On Ferrara, Bibl. Ariostea Cod. II,108, fol. 1r cf. Cataldi Palau, "Un nuovo manoscritto", p. 274.

54 Barlaam, ed. Volk, p. 126 (12.200–202).

55 *Barlaam and Ioasaph* p. 187, lines 1–3 (Woodward/Mattingly).

56 Lang (trans.), *Balavariani*, p. 58 with n. 1.

57 Cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 73–4 and 120–22.

58 Cf. Volk, "Symeon Metaphrastes–ein Benutzer des Barlaam-Romans"; Volk, "Das Fortwirken"; Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 59–60, 71–73 and 141–42.

59 Cf. Grossmann, "Die Abhängigkeit der Vita des Barlaam und Ioasaph vom Menologion des Symeon Metaphrastes" and Grossmann, "Review", pp. 335–36.

would then also chronologically support the authorship of Euthymios the Hagiorite.

1 *Features of the Greek Text*

Since the translations by the brothers Jean and Jacques de Billy into French (1574) and Latin (1577),[60] the *Barlaam* romance has been divided into 40 chapters. It is clearly not a uniform text; it is preserved in five textual families (*a* to *e*), as became evident in the course of editing the text.

Great hopes were tied up in Cod. V, 3692, from the Ukrainian National Library in Kiev,[61] written in 1021, and thus still during the lifetime of Euthymios the Athonite († 1028). Incidentally, it was by far the oldest dated *Barlaam* manuscript when it became available in Scheyern at the end of 1989. It casts attention on family *a*, which offers a reworked and polished text,[62] i.e. not the oldest but certainly the most consistent version, and probably the form of the text which most corresponds to the last wishes of the author. It was generally used as the main text in Volk's edition (2006), while the remaining families could be followed in the critical apparatus. It is noteworthy that the preferred family *a* apparently arose so late that it hardly circulated beyond Athos, not even to Constantinople; other, only slightly older, textual families had already spread far and wide. The 17 surviving representatives of family *a*, which in part continued to be copied into the 18th century, are today found on Athos or in Greece, with only three exceptions, but before 2006 they were not used for any edition nor translation. It is striking that the oldest manuscripts of family *a*, but also various old *Barlaam* manuscripts from other families, have long since lost their opening leaves. That is perhaps no coincidence,[63] since the Georgians on Athos and the memory of them there was discredited immedi-

60 The manuscript, which both used can be discerned. It is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 1125 (15th century) and it is a representative of family *c*; cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 401–04.

61 On the history and characteristics of this manuscript, which stems from Athos, see Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 336–40 with further literature.

62 Particular characteristics of family *a* are the correction of some, mainly Biblical, citations and the lively staging of numerous dialogues; but specific new mistakes have crept in as well (Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 588–90).

63 Especially Patmos, St John's Monastery, cod. 8 (11th century) – a manuscript of the important family *c* (see below pp. 417–19) – gives the impression that the first bi-folium of its first quaternion was deliberately copied without its original title and expertly exchanged, because in the process family *c* was not forgotten; on what is now a far too large, empty space, a more innocuous title was entered (cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 429–30).

ately after the death of Euthymios; they were later expelled.[64] It is possible that there was no longer any interest in transmitting a *Barlaam* title, which spoke of the translation activity and authorship of the Georgian Euthymios. For the title of the newly edited text, R. Volk chose one found in Cod. Athous Laur. K 49, an intact manuscript of the family *a* from the year 1320, which is directly or indirectly dependent on the Kiev manuscript. It contains no mention of Euthymios as author, however, and reads "An edifying story from the inner land of the Ethiopians, called the land of the Indians, thence brought to the Holy City by John, a monk of the monastery of Saint Sabas."[65] This form of the title, which strictly speaking names no author, only the bearer of the text, is the most common; usually it is elaborated further with the following words in italics "by John, *an honourable and virtuous man*, a monk of the monastery of Saint Sabas".[66]

Byzantine scholars did not regard the *Barlaam* romance as the work of John of Damascus, but rather viewed it as an anonymous book. In the 12th century, Michael Glykas cited the *Barlaam* romance throughout his work as a theological authority. Twice in his *World Chronicle* and seven times in his exegetical collection of letters,[67] he named it simply as the "divine, blessed or holy Barlaam", and thus clearly divided it from the genuine works of John Damascene, which he cited much more often. In library inventories we encounter it merely as "βιβλίον ὁ Βαρλαάμ (the *Barlaam* book)"; it also appears in the 13th century under the entry for πλάσμα (fiction) in the lexicon of Pseudo-Zonaras, as an example of a fictive work.[68]

The oldest version of the *Barlaam* romance, originating from the last years of the 10th century, is in family *c*, which sometime later became the basis for family *a*. Its surviving manuscripts are spread far and wide and are not always particularly old, yet they are of great importance for explaining the authorship. Among other manuscripts, those with the designations L (= Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 1771 [second half of the 14th century], fol. 181v-281v) and M (= Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, cod. gr. VII, 26 [12th–13th centuries]) belong to family *c* in Volk's new edition. And despite their relatively young age, they mention the translation of the text into Greek by Euthymios

64 Cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 63–64.

65 "Ἱστορία ψυχωφελὴς ἐκ τῆς ἐνδοτέρας τῶν Αἰθιόπων χώρας, τῆς Ἰνδῶν λεγομένης, πρὸς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν μετενεχθεῖσα διὰ Ἰωάννου μοναχοῦ μονῆς τοῦ ἁγίου Σάβα".

66 "διὰ Ἰωάννου μοναχοῦ, ἀνδρὸς τιμίου καὶ ἐναρέτου, μονῆς τοῦ ἁγίου Σάβα".

67 The references are collected together in *Barlaam*, ed. Volk, p. 492.

68 Cf. Ioannes Zonaras, *Lexicon*, ed. J.A.H. Tittmann, 2 vols., Leipzig 1808 (repr. Amsterdam 1967), vol. 2, col. 1555.

the Hagiorite in their titles. Both manuscripts are excellent representatives of family *c*. Manuscript L transmits some knowledge of Euthymios in its revealing title "Edifying chapters, brought from the inner land of the Ethiopians into the territory of the Byzantines and translated from the dialect of the Ethiopians into the Greek language by Euthymios the Georgian, the very holy monk, who also became teacher of the Great Lavra of Saint Athanasios on the Holy Mountain".[69] The dubious monk John of the Mar Saba Monastery, who, according to the most common form of the title, is supposed to have brought over the text, does not appear at all. In other respects, too, this rather unassuming codex is noteworthy. It consists of the same type of paper throughout and contains, on fol. 1r-159r, the well-known *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses (c. 1118–1187), then, on fol. 160r-181r, extracts from the *Life of Andreas Salos* (BHG^{n} 117e-f). Beginning on fol. 181v is the, well-hidden as it were, *Barlaam* romance.[70] It was apparently completed in great haste, perhaps in a library visited for a short time only, by at least five copyists, who apparently alternated with each other for short intervals.[71] At the end of fol. 281v, the *Barlaam* text breaks off in the 32nd chapter, perhaps the copyists had to end their work prematurely. The codex then ends at fol. 283v.

Manuscript M originally had a title on fol. 1r which was erased. It filled the space which is now taken up by an ornamental beam and the first two lines of the current title. The latter was written by a hand of the 15th century, which left many traces in the codex (initials, marginalia).[72] It remains unclear whether this new title represents a repetition of the original, or was taken from another exemplar. The current title has little in common with that of manuscript L, but rather reminds one of the title of the Latin translation (BHL 979b) of 1048; perhaps it might stem from a Latin who confused the Greek ὑπό with ὑπέρ. It reads "Edifying sermon, brought from the inner land of the Ethiopians to the Holy City by John, a monk of the monastery of Saint Sabas, and transferred from the Georgian into the Greek language for [*sic*] Euthymios, an honorable and pious

69 "Λόγοι ψυχωφελεῖς μετενεχθεῖσαι ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Αἰθιόπων ἐσωτέρας χώρας εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων γῆν καὶ μεταβληθεῖσα [sic] ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Αἰθιόπων διαλέκτου ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλληνίδα γλῶσσαν παρὰ Εὐθυμίου τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου μοναχοῦ τοῦ Ἴβηρος, τοῦ καὶ γεγονότος καθηγητοῦ τῆς μεγάλης λαύρας τοῦ ἁγίου Ἀθανασίου τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους".

70 In fact in instances of early cataloging, the Barlaam romance was not recognized in this former Codex Colbertinus 5227, which perhaps facilitated the 'preservation' of its more or less original title. In 1832 the first editor Jean-François Boissonade (1774–1857) spoke of 17 Parisian *codices regii*; the 18th, unknown to him, is Par. Gr. 1771, our manuscript L.

71 One notices the multiple changes of hands on folia 196r, 198v, 202r, 235r, 241r, 270v and 278v.

72 Cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 477–82.

man, the so-called Georgian."[73] As in the title of the Latin translation of 1048 (*Hystoria Barlae et Iosaphat de interiori Ethiopia deducta per Iohannem venerabilem monachum monasterii sancti Sabe in Heliam urbem et translata in Eolico per Eufinium sanctum virum*), the Monk John of the Mar Saba Monastery, who brought the text to Jerusalem, and Euthymios, who translated it into Greek, appear together. We read in a pleasantly sober review of Dölger's book, that most probably the title's second part with Euthymios' name felt out, which allowed for John of Mar Saba's identification with the Damascene.[74]

A clear instance of the originality of family *c* is the fact that its best representatives in 14.108–109 (ed. Volk) contribute an excerpt which is strictly necessary for the main text, and is missing from previous editions. Already in its poorer representatives, as well as in families *a, b* and *d* (family *e* has a text abridgement) this extract has disappeared.[75] Furthermore the text of family *c* is closer to a papyrus fragment of the cited *Apology* of Aristides than the reworked text of family *a*.[76] The same holds true for a citation from the *Mirror of Princes* of Agapetos.[77] For a comparison of the parallels between the *Barlaam* text and the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes, family *c* is also the most useful.

Family *b*, which in its formative phase lay between family *c* and *a*, had already branched out widely by the 11th century. This is worth mentioning, since a representative of the family, which has not survived must have borne the Euthymios title, and served as the exemplar for the aforementioned Latin translation, which was completed in 1048 in Constantinople.[78]

Already by the 11th century, family *e* was systematically reworked on the basis of families *c* and *b*; the former does not appear any more after the 13th century. Its text is highly abridged, longer theological discussions and prayers are practically always skipped, the language is robbed of its many beautiful formulations, and an entire parable is simply omitted.[79] Yet, the plot of the *Barlaam* romance is made accessible to the reader throughout. It was probably

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73 "Λ<όγος ψυχ>ωφελὴς ἐκ τῆς ἐνδοτέρας τῶν Αἰθιόπων χώρας πρὸς <τὴν ἁγ>ίαν πόλιν μετενεχθεὶς διὰ Ἰωάννου μοναχοῦ μονῆς τοῦ ἁγίου Σάββα, ἐπικομισθεῖσα [sic] δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰβήρων πρὸς τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν ὑπὲρ [sic] Εὐθυμίου ἀνδρὸς τιμίου καὶ εὐσεβοῦς τοῦ λεγομένου Ἴβηρος".

74 Abramowski, L., "[Besprechung von Dölger, Barlaam-Roman]", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 69 (1958), p. 146.

75 On this issue see Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, p. 584.

76 Cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 132 and 584–85.

77 Cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, p. 585.

78 See above, pp. 413, 418 and 419.

79 Cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 593–94.

at one time more widespread that its only five surviving witnesses would suggest, all of which are not directly dependent on one another. Its oldest representative is the preciously illuminated Cod. Athous Iviron 463 (ca. a. 1075); its abridged text, was, in the 13th century, directly translated in its margins into Old French.[80]

The oldest surviving witnesses of family *d* first stem from the 14th century, yet this family was long lasting. It was widespread in manuscripts into the 19th century, and was even printed by S. Kechagioglou (Athens 1884), and translated into Russian shortly afterwards. Elements of families *c* and *b* are to be found in family *d*, nothing however of family *a* disseminated. In one instance, family *d* also became decisive for the main text. Not only in the new edition of Volk, but already in Woodward / Mattingly (1914) (who used the edition of Kechagioglou without indicating it), it was utilized to fill a gap.[81]

There were numerous illuminated manuscripts of the *Barlaam* romance; some of them, as well as their traces, have survived to the present day.[82] Cod. Athous Iviron 463 (*c.*1075) has 79 remaining miniatures that contain no captions; others were lost when their leaves fell out. Aside from this codex, three different illustration cycles are presently known. Of the first, only the captions of a lost exemplar have survived in the margins of Codex OeW Cod. I.1.2°1, of the Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg (15th century); despite gaps within it and leaves fallen out, there are still 123 surviving.[83] Seventy-two motifs with captions[84] can be discerned in a subgroup of manuscripts, which appear in the critical apparatus of Volk, with the designations O,O' and O''. Finally, there are 197 motifs in Cod. Par. gr. 1128 (14th century),[85] and some manuscripts related to it only bear the captions.

80 The whole translation has not yet been published; few fragments were edited by P. Meyer, "Fragments d'une ancienne traduction française de Barlaam et Joasaph faite sur le texte grec au commencement du treizième siècle", *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 27 (1866), pp. 314–34. A new edition by E. Egedi-Kovács is in preparation, see Eadem, "Au Carrefour de diverses cultures".

81 Cf. *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, ed. Woodward/Mattingly p. 122.24–26, and *Barlaam*, ed. Volk, p. 87 (9.96–98).

82 Cf. Der Nersessian, *L'illustration du roman de Barlaam et Joasaph*, consisting of a text volume and an album containing reproductions.

83 Cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 289–91 and 525–36.

84 An edition of their captions is in Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 536–46.

85 An edition of their captions is in Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 6/1, pp. 546–81.

Conclusion

The *Barlaam* romance, dependent on a couple of oriental precedents, itself stands once again at the beginning of a long development. From Byzantium it moved far beyond the boundaries of the Greek-speaking world, and spread, by means of early translations into Latin, Arabic and Old Church Slavonic, along a north to south trajectory from Iceland to Ethiopia, and west to east from Portugal to Russia. It often belongs to the earliest literary monuments of these respective national literatures. Through the activity of Jesuit missionaries, *Barlaam* entered the Tagalog, Tamil, Chinese and Japanese languages. So arose a curious situation where Buddhists were proselytized by Christians using an originally Buddhist text. For those of us in the West as well, the *Barlaam* romance is ultimately behind much sensationalist revelatory literature, such as the Jesus in India legend. As already discussed, it was a long journey before the Barlaam romance could be satisfactorily dated and ascribed to a more or less definite author. The scholarly consensus today is that the text was composed around 1000 AD. John of Damascus is no longer believed to be its author, yet whether Euthymios only delivered a raw Greek translation from the original Georgian, and an unknown person then expanded it to create the *Barlaam* romance as we have it, or whether he personally wrote the entire Greek text, we cannot be sure. This, possibly futile discussion, has just begun.

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CHAPTER 17

The Wisdom of the Beasts: The Arabic *Book of Kalīla and Dimna* and the Byzantine *Book of Stephanites and Ichnelates*

Bettina Krönung

A The Arabic Book of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*

> The beginning of the book of *Kalīla and Dimna*. This book belongs to the collected exempla and narratives compiled by Indian scholars, who wrote these stories down in their most superb narrative perfection in order to achieve their aim. It has always been so, that scholars of all religious communities and languages accordingly aspire to make themselves understood, and to this end they employ any and all literary devices as well as their complete intellectual capacity. And so it was also one of their devices that they placed effective and eloquent speech in the mouths of four-footed beasts and birds. Several interrelated reasons induced them to do so. First, they found in this device the opportunity to express themselves in a truly free manner and to explore a wide field of subject matter. Second, the work combines entertainment and wisdom: on account of the latter the philosophers choose it, on account of the former, those with simple tastes. And with regard to students of all ages who devote themselves zealously to study, they will easily be able to remember what they have read.[1]

This prologue, translated out of Arabic, is attributed to the Persian author Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (= IM), who in the 8th century with the *kitāb Kalīla wa-Dimna* (= *KwD*) laid the foundation for one of the most popular and widely disseminated texts in world literature. The *KwD* circulated not only in every oriental language, but also in all the languages of the European Middle Ages as well as in Byzantium, where it had the Greek title *Stephanites kai Ichnilates*. In his prologue, IM himself anticipates the primary reasons for the book's overwhelming popularity, which transcended every cultural boundary and language barrier. Of Indian provenance, the work is composed of exempla and narratives, and

1 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. Cheikho, p. 45 (corresponds to ed. ʿAzzām, p. 3).

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arises out of a common necessity existing in every culture – the need for intellectuals to make themselves intelligible to their readers, a task for which *exempla* are well suited. The *KwD* is known in modernity primarily for its colorful illustrations of the animal stories – depictions that are preserved in both oriental and several European manuscripts.[2] However, the "exempla and narratives" (arab. *amṯāl* and *aḥādīṯ*) in the first sentence of IM's prologue are not limited only to animal stories in the sense of La Fontaine's fable, but include all kinds of *exempla*,[3] as is clear, for instance, in the chapters entitled "Traveller and Goldsmith," "King's Son and His Companions," and "Ascetic and His Guest." Moreover, in his use of the term *maṯal* (example) both in the prologue as well as in later parts of the *KwD*, IM designates a variety of individual narrative units, which may be classified according to modern notions as many different types of microtexts, such as fables, parables, proverbs, aphorisms, and allegories.[4] The work is thus characterized by the use of literary forms that are suitable as means of expression for intellectuals from every culture; their use, therefore, cannot be isolated to a specific cultural environment. With respect to subject matter, this literary form imposes no limitations upon the author, since the exemplary narrative units offer the opportunity for completely free self-expression; therefore, the author can expose the weaknesses of people and affairs in society and politics without prejudice. As far as the audience is concerned, the work contains something for everyone: for the philosophers, wisdom; for simple minds, amusement; and for those who devote themselves zealously to study, memorizing what they have read will be easy. These aspects were already identified by IM himself as the most important elements of the *KwD*'s recipe for success as a premodern international bestseller. Of course, IM could not have guessed that his Arabic adaptation of the literary material, which in essence can be traced back through a (no longer extant) 6th-century Middle Persian version to a (likewise no longer extant) version of the Indian *Pañcatantra*,[5] would actually constitute the basis for the vast majority of other

2 On the *KwD*'s illustrations, see Brockelmann, "Kalīla wa-Dimna", p. 506; Grube, "Prolegomena"; Bizzarri, "L'image enchâssée"; Kinoshita, "Translatio/n", p. 380, n. 48. See also the volumes published to mark the exhibition of ms. Munich, Bayrische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. arab. 616 (14th century): Fansa/Eckhard (eds.), *Von listigen Schackalen*, and Fansa (ed.), *Tierisch moralisch*.

3 On the history of the *fabula*'s significance and how it acquired the limited meaning of "animal story" through La Fontaine's anthologies, see Holzberg, "Äsop".

4 On this subject, see also Chraïbi, "De Kalîla et Dimna", pp. 43–44, and Forster, "Fabel und Exempel", which examines the second chapter of the *KwD* in light of the various types of narrative models (according to definitions given by modern literary critics) appearing there.

5 See also n. 11 below.

offshoots of the *KwD* and would thus play a critical role in the history of the work's transmission. Nor could he foresee that his text would today constitute the oldest transmitted version of the work – aside from a Syriac translation of the (no longer extant) Middle Persian text produced in 570 CE by a certain Bōḏ.[6]

1 Narratological Structure and Content in the *KwD* by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ

The *KwD*'s special and unique charm, which continues to captivate modern readers, does not owe so much to the narrative itself and the individual *exempla* upon which it is based, but rather to the way in which these stories were assembled in order to create a larger whole. Yet the individual *exempla* are not connected in an arbitrary way, nor are they stitched together into a mere collection of stories organized according to their textual content. Rather, they are integrated into an overarching narrative frame that encompasses both the individual chapters as well as the entire work. The frame narrative thus creates a higher narrative level encompassing the collected stories in addition to creating thematic and chronological cohesion between the individual chapters. This feature distinguishes the so-called oriental (also called "dramatic" or "dynamic") frame from its counterpart in the Western Middle Ages – the instructive or static framework, which we find for instance in Aesop's collections of fables.[7]

The frame story of the *KwD* unquestionably traces back to its predecessor, a 6th-century Middle Persian version that is no longer extant.[8] It is shaped by a conversation between two fictional characters, the Indian king Dabšalim

6 The so-called older Syriac translation with the title Qalīlag w Ḏamnag is preserved in only one manuscript from the 16th century; it has appeared in two editions: *Kalilag und Damnag*, ed. G. Bickell, Leipzig 1876 (with an introduction by T. Benfey), and *Kalila und Dimna,* ed. F. Schulthess, vol. I–II, Berlin 1911 (both include a German translation). The most important aspect of this Syriac version is that through comparison with IM's version, it provides us with a pretty good idea of how the Middle Persian text must have looked; see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 1–2. See also below, n. 8 and 13, and p. 444.

7 See Lasater, *Spain to England*; Picone, "Tre tipi"; Taylor, "Frames eastern and western", p. 28.

8 A comparison of the Arabic text with the older Syriac version, which itself constitutes an independent translation of the Middle Persian text, shows that the frame narrative was already present in Burzōē's Middle Persian version of the *KwD* (see n. 6, 13 and 17). Although the frame narrative of the *KwD* resembles the Indian frame stories in the *Pañcatantra* and the *Mahābhārata*, it has no direct Indian model. The names of the protagonists of the frame story, Dabšalim and Bidpai, are fictional and have likewise no precursor in Indian literature. For a detailed discussion, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 18–23.

and his philosopher, Bidpai. The latter's purpose is to expound the general ethical questions posed by the king at the beginning of each chapter and their correlation to the chief problems of government and politics by means of exemplary stories. Regarding the overall scope, the first six of the 15 chapters forming the body of the Arabic *KwD* make up the main section of the entire work.[9] Aside from the second chapter, which was added by IM,[10] these chapters can be traced back to the very first version of the work – namely to the no longer extant recension of Indian *Pañcatantra,* which used the Persian author Burzōē as a model.[11] At the same time, the chapters represent the work's main core, which existed unchanged in all the early derivative versions of IM's *KwD*, and they all largely adhere to the common theme of friendship, a topic predetermined by the frame story.[12] Thus, the philosopher Bidpai is asked by the Indian king Dabšalim to discuss the following questions: How is the friendship of two men transformed into hostility and hatred through the perfidious intervention of a conniving person? ("Lion and Ox") What fate awaits the conniver as a result of his actions in the first chapter? ("Investigation of Dimna") What does a sincere, indestructible friendship look like? ("Ring-dove") Is it possible to make an enemy one's friend? ("Owls and Crows") And how does someone who has obtained this coveted blessing (namely, a good friendship)

9 There are 15 chapters without taking into account the *KwD*'s prologues (see also below, pp. 434–38). Henceforth the order of the chapters corresponds to the manuscript edited by Cheikho (see below, p. 446); however, the chapter "King of Mice", which is part of the original collection, is missing from this manuscript (see below, n. 16 and 59).

10 On this see below, pp. 443–44.

11 Based on the findings of Benfey, *Panschatantra*, the first translator of the Sanskrit work *Pañcatantra*, as well as those of Hertel, *Das Pañcatantra*, and F. Edgerton, *The Panchatantra Reconstructed* (American Oriental Series, 2–3), 2 vols., New Haven 1924, scholarship today is still essentially in agreement that there must have been a Sanskrit original (also known as a Proto-*Pañcatantra*) that is no longer extant and served as a model for the first five chapters of Burzōē's Middle Persian *KwD*. The text transmitted under the name *Pañcatantra* to the present day thus merely represents a later, independent reworking of this original; however, the *Tantrākhyāyka,* an ancient Indian book of fables from around 300 CE, is considered to be the most important basis for the original text. The *Tantrākhyāyka* was edited and translated into German by Hertel; see *Tantrākhyāyka*, ed. and German trans. J. Hertel, Berlin 1909–1910. The only certain *terminus ad quem* for the origin of the Indian original is the dating of the Middle Persian translation of the *KwD* to the reign of the Sassanid king, Chosrau Anuschirwan (531–579) (on this see below, pp. 434–35). For the history of scholarship on the *Pañcatantra*, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 1; Marzolph, "Fabeln", p. 222; Hámori, "Shameful", pp. 189–90; Brockelmann, "Kalīla wa-Dimna", p. 593, and Riedel, "Kalila wa Demna", p. 387.

12 See De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 13 and 61; Chraïbi, "De Kalîla et Dimna", p. 48.

lose it again? ("Ape and Tortoise"). The next chapter ("Ascetic and Weasel") is rather loosely related to the preceding chapters and treats the theme of friendship only in an indirect way: Bidpai discusses what is in store for a person who acts hastily and does not consider the consequences of his/her actions (namely, the death of a close friend). The remaining nine chapters are substantially shorter than the aforementioned chapters belonging to the core of the work. The first five of these chapters, as well as the five aforementioned chapters from the *Pañcatantra* (Ch. 1 and Ch. 3–6), found their way via the Persian Burzōē into the (no longer extant) Middle Persian version of the *KwD*, a fact which is unanimously accepted in modern scholarship.[13] One of them is unique, in that it can be traced back to a Buddhist legend;[14] three in turn originate in the Brahmanic *Mahābhārata*,[15] while only one, "King of Mice," is presumed to have originated from Burzōē's own pen.[16] The subjects treated in these chapters deal with the following questions: How can a king best protect his government? (namely by means of clemency – "Iladh, Schadram and Iracht"); How can a ruler find a loyal adviser? ("King of Mice"); Is it possible to profit from one's enemies – and if so, how? ("Mouse and Cat"); What can be expected from vengeful people who distrust each other? ("King and Bird"); Why it is fitting for one who was unjustly punished to receive pardon and

13 A comparison of the Arabic version with the older Syriac version shows that the aforementioned ten chapters were already part of the Burzōē's Middle Persian version of the *KwD* (see above, n. 6).

14 In the Arabic manuscripts, this story bears the title, "Iladh, Schadram and Iracht", but De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 13, 61–62 and 66–73, designates it according to its content as "King and 8 Dreams". In the manuscript edited by Cheikho and ʿAzzām, this chapter comes immediately after the first 6 chapters, while it is tenth in De Sacy's sequence; on the order of individual chapters in the various versions and Arabic manuscripts, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 62, 66–73.

15 These are the stories "Mouse and Cat" (*Mahābh.* XII ch. 138), "King and Bird" (*Mahābh.* ch. 139) and "The Lion and Jackal" (*Mahābh.* ch. 111). These three stories were preserved as a cohesive block in most of the early versions (except for the Hebrew and ancient Spanish versions, on this see below, p. 447) and in almost all the Arabic manuscripts. See De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 13, 61–62 and 66–73.

16 Nöldeke, *Die Erzählung vom Mäusekönig*, has shown that this chapter definitely has a Middle Persian origin, not an Indian one. However, it is still unclear why the story is transmitted in only a few (albeit also in one of the oldest) Arabic manuscripts and in only a small number of the early derivative versions (namely in the older Syriac translation and in recension Bδ of the Byzantine *Stepahnites kai Ichnilates*). In ʿAzzām's edition, this chapter is 8th in the sequence, while it is omitted altogether in the editions of Cheikho und De Sacy. See De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 13–14, 62 and 66–73. On this chapter, see also below, n. 59.

recompense from the king? ("Lion and Jackal"). Only the last four chapters, the order of which varies considerably in the various Arabic manuscripts and in the early derivative versions, probably trace back to IM himself.[17] The following questions are treated here: What is the fate of a person who shows benevolence to someone from whom he can expect no thanks? ("Traveller and Goldsmith"); How is it possible that an ignorant man obtains dignity and happiness, while the clever man gets into trouble? ("King's Son and his Companions"); How does someone who has experienced a tragedy himself guard against bringing the same fate upon another? ("Lioness and Horseman"); When a person who, instead of spending his time in his usual pursuits, takes up a new, strange one, how does he cope when he finally has to give it up? ("Ascetic and His Guest"). All other stories appearing in some Arabic manuscripts and derivative versions are later additions and do not belong to IM's original collection of texts.[18]

In each of the fifteen chapters, the initial exemplum – told by the philosopher Bidpai as an illustration of each respective topic to be discussed – creates a separate, self-contained frame story, which in turn is illuminated by a number of subsidiary exempla. This results in a complex narrative construct with a clear hierarchy of intricately interwoven narrative levels. Each subordinate narrative occupies a deliberately chosen position – a singular place in which the narrative reveals the intended sense of the overarching story. The transitions between the superior and subordinate narrative levels are always marked in both directions by a specific form and follow clear narratological rules in other ways as well.[19] This nested narrative structure, also known as "Chinese box technique" and which Bürgel described as "nesting like Russian dolls,"[20] is

17 The only extant manuscript of the older Syriac edition breaks off after the previously mentioned chapters taken from the Middle Persian version. Thus, it is impossible to prove without a doubt that these four chapters of the Arabic *KwD* did not also belong to this (and therefore to the Persian) collection. But because these chapters have a character all of their own, it is highly probable that IM authored them; on this, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 13. For more on the chapters added by IM and their origin, see below, pp. 440–45.

18 For example, the two stories "Two Kingfishers and Whimbrel" and "Dove, Fox, and Heron" at the end of the older Hebrew and Spanish version and in some Arabic manuscripts, on this see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 12 and 62.

19 Thus, the narrative progress always proceeds from the next highest to the next lowest level or vice versa, and it is never the case that a level is skipped over. Stringing together multiple stories on a single level is also avoided. On methods of achieving cohesion among the various diegetic levels, see Bossong, "Sémantique", and Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 102–05.

20 Bürgel, "Nachwort", p. 275.

another characteristic of oriental frame stories – especially famous for its use in *1001 Nights*.

This narrative nesting, characteristic of the entire *KwD*, is clearly illustrated in a passage from the first and longest chapter ("Lion and Ox"), in which the two jackals and title characters of the entire work, Kalīla and Dimna, appear as protagonists.[21] At the beginning of this chapter, the philosopher Bidpai is asked by the Indian king to explain how the friendship of two men can be transformed into hostility and hatred by the perfidious intervention of a third party. First, this topic will be treated on the first narrative level using the exemplum titled "Lion and Ox," which simultaneously acts as a frame story for the entire chapter. The setting of this *exemplum* is the animal kingdom, ruled over by the lion. When the bull Šatraba[22] strays into this kingdom and erupts with a loud bellow, this previously unknown sound caused so much fear in the lion that he no longer dared to leave his dwelling. This behavior arouses the desire of the jackal Dimna, a member of the king's court, to win the trust of the lion in order to know the reasons for his reclusiveness and thus work his way into a privileged rank in the royal court. In an extensive dialogue between Dimna and his brother Kalīla, the latter tries to dissuade the former from undertaking his plan, because it is not in accordance with their rank to interfere in the ruler's affairs. However Dimna cannot be dissuaded from his plan, and he finally manages to reach the king of the animals and win his confidence. After the lion finally confides to Dimna the reason for his reclusiveness, the jackal explores the origin of the fearsome roar and brings Šatraba to him. The bull then gradually rises in rank until he becomes one of the lion's closest confidants and in so doing provokes the envy of Dimna. How Dimna plots to do away with his rival and how he plays the lion and the bull off each other through cunning manipulative strategies are described at length. Even Kalīla's admonishing words cannot deter Dimna from his intrigues, and at the end of the chapter, a bloody battle between the lion and bull takes place, in which the latter loses his life.[23]

One of the many subsidiary narratives of this frame story is presented by Dimna after he has decided to eliminate Šatraba in order to regain his former rank with the king. He tells his brother Kalīla (who wants to deter him from his schemes) that he would achieve his aim not by physical strength, but rather by

21 Both names can probably be traced back to Burzōē's adoption of the names Karaṭaka und Damanaka from the Sanskrit model in the Middle Persian version (here *Karīrak ud Damanak*); further details on this subject are found in De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 12.

22 On the different variants of this name in the Arabic manuscripts see ed. Cheikho, p. 39.

23 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. Cheikho, pp. 53–101 (corresponds to ed. ʿAzzām, pp. 43–97).

strategy. This he illustrates by means of the story "The Raven and the Snake," in which a raven whose young are captured regularly by a snake decides to scratch out his enemy's eyes. But before he puts his plan into action, he seeks the advice of a jackal. The jackal in turn advises the raven against this plan, since it is wiser to achieve his aim without endangering himself. To illustrate this, the jackal then brings in another subordinate narrative, "The Heron and the Crab". This story is about a heron, who is no longer able to catch fish on account of his old age and who tells a contrived story to a crab crawling by. This story is intended to persuade the crab to hand over to the heron not only his fish companions but also himself as prey. But the crab sees through the heron's plan and strangles him with his claws, so as to forestall his own demise. At this point, the reader is led back to the next narrative level, where the jackal says to the raven that he told this story in order to show how a trick has the power to destroy even the ones who conceived it in the first place. Then he discloses to the raven how he can succeed in eliminating the snake through cunning actions without suffering any harm himself. Then it returns to the first narrative level, where Dimna finally comments that he told this story to show that one can achieve more by cunning than by mere physical strength.[24]

The complex narrative relationships can be represented by the following schematic.

Chapter 1

⟶

Frame Dabšalim – Bidpai

1 The Lion and the Ox — The Lion and the Ox 1

2 The Raven and the Snake — The Raven and the Snake 2

3 The Heron and the Crab 3

2 The Prologue of the *KwD*

In addition to IM's prologue cited at the beginning, which he set as a preface to his translation of the *KwD*, the original text of the Arabic collection contains two more prologues, the so-called "Shorter Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India" and the "Life of Burzōē." The last two are considered to be historical, as De Blois has conclusively shown; they can in fact be traced back to Burzōē, the personal physician of the Sassanid ruler Chosrau Anuschirwan (531–579).[25] According

24 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. Cheikho, pp. 69–72 (corresponds to ed. ʿAzzām, pp. 63–66).

25 De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*.

to the two prologues, Burzōē brought the *KwD* back from a trip to India to Persia and there translated it from Sanskrit into Middle Persian. It can thus be assumed that IM adopted these prologues from his Middle Persian model. All the other prologues attested in Arabic manuscripts and their dependent derivative versions are later additions. This is also true of the prologue by ʿAlī b. š-Šāh al-Fārisī, which appears frequently in Arabic manuscripts and contains a fictional story about the authorship of the *KwD*; in this prologue, the *KwD* is attributed to the philosopher Bidpai, who is well known from the frame story.[26] The so-called "longer version of Burzōē's Voyage to India," is also a later addition and will be a later topic for discussion.

In all three original prologues of the Arabic *KwD*, we are again dealing in each case with a small, distinct, self-contained framework that is built according to a narrative principle similar to that we saw above with regard to the main body of the work. Although the protagonists of the frame story are historical individuals, and not (as in the case of Dabšalim and Bidpai) fictional people, here too the plot is illustrated by means of multiple subordinate microtexts. In the "Shorter Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India," which is transmitted in only a few Arabic manuscripts,[27] it is reported that the Persian physician Burzōē read about a magic plant in the Indian mountains – a plant that can allegedly bring the dead back to life, if used properly. With the permission of the ruler Chosrau, Burzōē subsequently travels to India in search of the magic plant. But when his undertaking fails, Indian sages finally enlighten him: the plant is part of an allegory, according to which the mountains signify wise men, the herbs signify their books, and death signifies ignorance, which can only be combated with the aforementioned plant. Burzōē then begins to collect Indian books and translate them into Persian. He returns to Persia. Chosrau is extremely pleased and instructs his minister Buzurghmir to keep the books

26 As Beeston, "The "Alī ibn Shāh' preface", has shown, this prologue probably originated in an early Persian edition of the *KwD* from the 12th century and from there found its way into later Arabic manuscripts, but its form was modified by the Arabic translator (for details, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 24–25 and 41–42. On the Persian transmission, see below, p. 448.). This prologue is not transmitted in any of the other derivative versions (Greek, Hebrew, Latin, etc.).

27 In some Arabic manuscripts, this prologue is transmitted together with the "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India". A critical edition of both versions is given in De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 81–95. In addition, only the "Shorter Version" appears in the Latin edition by John of Capua, which in turn traces back to the older Hebrew version (in which, however, the beginning with the prologue is missing), as well as in the later Hebrew and in the old Spanish version. On this topic, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 40 and 43. On this group of translations, see below, pp. 447–48.

translated by Burzōē, including the *KwD*, in the royal treasury. Unlike in this "Shorter Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India," the "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India" reports that Burzōē undertook his trip to India from the very beginning on behalf of Chosrau Anushirwan – namely, in order to locate the *KwD* for him and bring it to Persia. Although – or perhaps because – the "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India" is a relatively late version of the story about Burzōē, it by and large displaced the historically authentic prologue, "Shorter Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India," in the reception of the *KwD*.[28] This is evidenced by the fact that all existing editions of the Arabic text are based on manuscripts containing only the "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India,"[29] and that several translations of the Arabic version, as well as the Byzantine *Stephanites kai Ichnilates*[30] and the Persian editions by Abū Ma'ālī and al-Bukharī, transmit only the "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India."[31]

The "Shorter Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India" reads as an allegorical stylization of the central theme in the longest of the three prologues, the "Life of Burzōē," for in this case too the narrative is about the quest to conquer death. The frame story of this prologue follows the autobiographical stages of Burzōē, who here recounts his life himself and illustrates his deeds by means of 21 exemplary microtexts.[32] Again, we are faced with an independent dramatic frame story. At the beginning, the reader learns quite a bit about the origins and childhood of the Persian author: for example, one learns that Burzōē was the favorite child of his parents, benefited from a good education early in his youth, was sent to school at the age of seven, and ultimately mastered the art of medicine. The end of the prologue is marked by Burzōē's return from his trip to India; in addition to the *KwD*, he brought back copies of many other books to Persia. Everything Burzōē recounts in between from his biography is

28 De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 44–45, classifies the "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India" into recension A, recension B, and a "mixed recension". For the detailed argument as to why this prologue is not regarded as historical and must be a later addition, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 55–56 and 61. Between the "Shorter Version" and the "Longer Version" is Burzōē's journey to India as depicted in Firdausī's *Shā-nāme* (completed before 1030), which accordingly provides the basis for the "Longer Version"; see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 56 and 65.

29 Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. Cheikho, pp. 19–29; 'Azzām, pp. 13–24.

30 On this see below, pp. 449–56.

31 On the prologue in the Byzantine *Stephanites kai Ichnilates* see below, n. 103. On the prologue in the editions of Abū Ma'ālī and al-Bukharī, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 40.

32 Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. Cheikho, pp. 30–44; 'Azzām, pp. 25–42. See also Nöldeke, Borzoes *Einleitung*, 11–27 (see below, n. 60).

characterized by his struggle for the meaning of life and his quest for a perfect life. Thus, accounts of the most important stages of his biography are embedded in extravagant philosophical and spiritual reflections on the motives behind his particular actions. Burzōē initially explains at length that he worked as a doctor after his medical training without receiving payment for his services, in order thereby to secure his reward in the afterlife. But because medicine could not answer the question of how to surmount the transience of human life, he turned to religion and compared the various faiths with each other, but he did not find the truth he sought. Torn between secular and religious life, Burzōē then laments the travails of earthly existence, rages about the fact that he lives in a time dominated by grave depravity, and expresses surprise that, despite all this, people do not care more deeply about their spiritual salvation. Ultimately, he illustrates these final thoughts with the famous parable from India, "Man in the Well," which we also know in a slightly modified form from the various versions of *Barlaam and Ioasaph*.[33] For a long time, scholars speculated that IM added these passages criticizing religion to the preface, as he wished to criticize Islam from a Manichaean perspective.[34] But it is now clear that this rather abstract criticism of religion is not specifically directed against Islam and need not have been written from a Manichaean's viewpoint; on the contrary, it probably traces back to the Middle Persian forerunner of the *KwD*.[35] Many of the Arabic manuscripts contain a reference in the beginning of the prologue that Buzurghmir, the Minister of Chosraus, transmitted the words of Burzōē ("Buzurgmihr said […] that Burzōē said …"). This statement, however, should be understood as an addition to the *KwD* by a later editor who wanted to make this prologue conform to the "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India," which states at the end that Buzurgmihr wrote the "Life of Burzōē".[36]

33 On the appearance of this parable in the romance of *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, its presence in Indian art and literature, as well as its later reception in Byzantine and post-Byzantine time, see the contribution by R. Volk in this volume, p. 404, n. 5. For a detailed discussion concerning the correlation of the parable in the Arabic *k. Bilawhar wa-Būḏāsf* and the *KwD*, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 34–37.

34 This widespread assumption in earlier scholarship is attributed to al-Bīrūnī (11th c.), who in one of his works accused IM of producing Manichaean propaganda with "The Life of Burzōē" (see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 26–27). Along these lines, see Gabrieli, "L'opera", pp. 236–47; Bürgel, "Nachwort", p. 274, or Brockelmann, "Kalīla wa-Dimna", p. 593. On IM's Manichaeism, see below, n. 41.

35 For this argument, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 26–30.

36 De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 53–54.

In IM's prologue, the frame does not actually portray a story with a dramatic or dynamic sequence of events, but instead a kind of intellectual reflection by the author: a framing discourse on the meaning and purpose of the greater work, containing a total of 16 subordinate narrative units.[37] After the prologue's initial sentences cited earlier, IM explains that the most important thing in reading the *KwD* is to read the book "completely and with perseverance." Merely skimming the work is useless if the reader lacks a precise understanding of the passages contained in it, because then the reader suffers the same misfortune as the man who discovered and dug up a valuable treasure in the desert. In order to avoid the stress of carrying away the treasure, the man let some assistants bring it to his house. But when the man himself arrived home, he did not find his treasure, because each of the assistants had run off with the portion entrusted to him. In the end, the man got nothing except for the onerous work of digging up the treasure. Subsequently IM explains that the situation is similar when one reads this book, since one must understand its words according to a deeper meaning, just as one can only benefit from good nuts when one opens them and extracts their contents.[38] The rest of this preface is written in the same style. At the end of the prologue, IM then explains that he added this extra Arabic chapter (that is, his prologue) to this book, which the Persians discovered and translated from Indian into their own language; the addition is meant to clearly set forth the meaning to all those who want to read, understand, and copy the work.[39]

3 The Arabic *KwD* – A Work by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ

3.1 ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ as author of the *adab* movement

It is no coincidence that IM created precisely the version of the *KwD* that developed into a folktale book popular across centuries and cultures. The elements crucial for this success – elements expressed in IM's prologue itself – actually correspond precisely to the literary taste and the intellectual needs of the contemporary ʿAbbāsids. IM himself was one of the most important intellectuals of his time and played a formative role in the furthering of scholarly and literary development under the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775); IM acted as an advisor to al-Manṣūr, who then commissioned him to translate the

37 On this prologue, see also Chraïbi, "De Kalîla et Dimna", pp. 44–45.

38 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. ʿAzzām, pp. 4–5. This passage is not included by Cheikho because the prologue in the manuscript he is editing breaks off after the first page.

39 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. ʿAzzām, p. 12.

KwD into Arabic, as we know from al-Mas'ūdī.[40] Born in 720 in Persia, IM was originally a Zoroastrian named Rozbih; he later converted to Islam and, like his father Muqaffa', played an active role in the administration of Islamic rulers – initially under the Umayyads, then later under the 'Abbāsids. Since we know that in 759 IM fell out of favor with al-Manṣūr (allegedly on account of his heretical views) and was subsequently dismissed and tortured to death, the timing of his transmission of the *KwD* into Arabic can thereby be narrowed down to a relatively precise window.[41] The fact that before his denigration IM was able to rise to become one of the most prominent members of the intelligentsia promoted by the 'Abbāsid caliph is due without a doubt to his extraordinary skills both as a political advisor as well as a scholarly and literary polymath. In reality, the production of literary texts under al-Manṣūr was inextricably entwined with the political objectives of the caliphate. Among the most important of these objectives was the cultural integration of the factions who had helped the 'Abbāsids to seize power in the middle of the 8th century; these included Greeks, Syrians, and above all Persians. Therefore, these groups were not only entrusted with important duties in the 'Abbāsid administration, but through their cultural heritage, they also contributed considerably to the literature of the new caliphate. In this sense, al-Manṣūr excelled as the initiator of a universal intellectual project, in the course of which scholarly and literary works were translated out of Greek, Syrian and Persian into Arabic.[42] The Arabic language thereby came to be the *lingua franca* of a universalistic Islam, whose intellectual manifestation found expression in all-encompassing *adab* literature. The *adib* personifies the educated and cultured Muslim who was also well versed in non-Arabic (e.g., Hellenistic, Persian, Indian) literature and

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40 Mas'ūdī, *Murūǧ aḏ-Ḏahab* ed. C. Barbier de Meynard/P. De Courteille, vol. 8, Paris 1917, p. 291. See Gutas, *Greek thought*, pp. 30–31; Hámori, "Shameful and Injurious", p. 211; Kinoshita, "Translatio/n", p. 373. The information passed down in the early Persian tradition as early as the 10th century – namely that the *KwD* was commissioned by the caliph al-Ma'mūn (813–833) – cannot be true on chronological grounds; on this, see Riedel, "Kalila wa Demna", p. 387.

41 Whether IM in fact was Manichaean is still in dispute. It is clear that he is again and again linked with Manichaeism or generally with "heresy" in the sources, and that he himself at least sympathized with Manichaean tendencies, as his work in defense of Manichaeism suggests. On IM's biography and work, see Sourdel, "La Biographie"; Gabrieli, "L'opera"; Latham, "Ibn al-Muqaffa'"; van Ess, *Theologie II*, pp. 22–36; De Blois, "Ibn al-Muqaffa"; Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 22–24.

42 On the translation movement under al-Manṣūr, see Gutas, *Greek thought* pp. 28–60; Leder, "Aspekte", p. 126; Kinoshita, "Translatio/n", pp. 373–74; Shamma, "Translating into the Empire".

thereby was inspired to pursue a humanistic education and lifestyle.[43] With this development, Arabic ceased to be purely a language of revelation within Islam and grew to become the medium for adopting new literary material into a more widely recognized Islamic culture. These characteristics of the *adab* movement are best expressed in IM's prologue, when he informs the reader about the work's Indian and Persian origin and notes the following points: it originated out of a desire shared by sages from all nations – that is, the desire to make themselves intelligible to their readers (i.e., the universalist notion of *adab* as a melting pot of all cultures); it is written in a style that adorns itself with every kind of eloquence (a reference to the elevated register and formal requirements of the prose language featured in *adab* literature – demands that IM's *KwD* clearly fulfills); it employs literary forms that – in addition to their entertainment value – are particularly suited for the educational purposes (i.e., *exempla* and narratives). This also dovetails with IM's conception of the *KwD* as a work that requires the reader to delve deeper into the text in order to reveal its full meaning and intent. With regard to *adab*, this is meant in an ethical and moral sense as well as with respect to politics; the concept applies to everyone pursuing a holistic and humanistic education. Thus, it applies to sages as well as to young students – and last but not least, to the very caliph who commissioned his own adviser to translate the *KwD* into Arabic. This shows very clearly that the *KwD* was intended to be a work for the masses and at the same time a "real" (i.e., not purely literary) mirror for princes, at least for the caliph al-Manṣūr.

3.2 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's Contribution to the *KwD*

These aspects characteristic of the *adab* movement are thus also considered the basis for the subsequent broad circulation of the *KwD* as a "folktale book" across nations, cultures, and languages. But what specific changes did IM make in his translation of the *KwD* from Persian into Arabic in order to produce this literary version, which is one of the most successful pieces of world literature of all time? The most striking feature is a significant shift in emphasis with regard to the issue of correct behavior (ethical, moral, and political); this is apparent both in the aforementioned structural changes by IM (the addition of 5 chapters) as well as in various modifications to details. That is, the goal of the Indo-Persian prototype of the *KwD* (i.e., the ten chapters of Indian, Buddhist, and Persian provenance) does not include the ethical and moral instruction of a broad audience. Rather, in the *Protopañcatantra* – but also in Burzōē's Persian

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43 On the development of *adab* literature and the concept of *adab* in general, see Gabrieli, "Adab"; Pellat, "Adab".

edition – we are dealing with a political handbook in a Machiavellian sense.[44] So here too we encounter a "real" mirror for princes, but the benchmarks of this practical guide to statesmanship are not righteousness and upright conduct. The ideal of the successful politician conveyed here can instead be described with the epithets "clever," "cunning," and "scheming." This is already clear in the first chapter of the *Protopañcatantra*, "Lion and Ox," as was shown earlier. The success story of the scheming jackal Dimna illustrates that in the end, the cleverest one wins, and that deception, betrayal, and trickery are a worthwhile means to an end when it comes to achieving one's personal or political goals. The exemplary narratives placed in the mouth of Dimna always showcase the strategy by which he pursues his own interests; this strategy includes murder, lies, and trickery. Here Dimna applies his *exempla* in an antithetical way: either to disclose or to disguise his tactics. In the first case, as in the examples, "The Raven and the Snake" and "The Heron and the Crab," evil behavior is glossed over and justified by exemplary stories.[45] In the second case, the *exempla* are used for the purpose of deceiving the opponent in order to accomplish personal objectives. This is exactly what happens when Dimna successfully incites the bull Šatraba against the lion and then manipulates the situation so that the bull does not lunge at the lion first – on the contrary, the lion is the first to attack the bull, who then perishes in the fight. Dimna persuades the bull to be wary of the lion, since "[It is known that] whoever disdains the weak on account of his weakness will suffer just as the lord of the sea suffered at the hands of the sandpipers."[46] This is then followed by a story on the first metadiegetic level: "The Sandpipers and the Lord of the Sea", in which an avian pair hatch their eggs on the seashore. Since the female cannot convince her mate to seek out a safer breeding ground, where the young birds would not live in danger of being snatched away by the lord of the sea (i.e., the waves), she relates the exemplum "The Turtle and the Two Ducks." Her point is that the one who does not heed the voice of caution will end up like the tortoise who did not listen to the voice of the two ducks. This tale is about two ducks who wanted to abandon their familiar environment because the pond on which they lived had dried up. The turtle, who lived in the same place, asked the two ducks not to leave him there alone. The ducks complied with this request and flew away with a stick clutched between their beaks; the turtle clung to this stick and was thus carried through the air. But because the turtle disobeyed the ducks' advice that he should under no circumstances open his mouth if people below should speak to him, he fell from a great height and died (Figure 17.1).

44 See De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 15–16.

45 See above, p. 434.

46 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. Cheikho, p. 88, lines 11–12.

FIGURE 17.1 *Codex arab. 616 (14th century), Munich, Bavarian State Library,* Kalila and Dimna*, fol. 61*^{v}*: The Turtle and the Two Ducks.* PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, MUNICH.

Back in the *exemplum* on the next higher narrative level, the sinister warning of the female bird initially comes true, for the lord of the sea does indeed snatch up the baby birds (which have hatched by this point). Nevertheless, the *exemplum* of the turtle and the ducks loses its significance in the end, as the male bird now plans to take revenge on the one who kidnapped his children by attacking him with an avian brigade. Intimidated by this warlike gesture, the lord of the sea does not risk fighting with the birds, but establishes a peace with them and gives the avian pair their young back.[47] In telling this parable, Dimna aims to discourage the bull from his plan to attack the lion – and he succeeds. Observing the advice given in the exemplum ultimately leads Šatraba to certain death. The message of the exemplum "The Turtle and the Two Ducks" is thus rendered nonsensical in two ways: in the parable of the sandpiper and king of the sea, the one who fails to heed the voice of caution does not perish like the turtle does (on the contrary, he gets his children back), and in the frame story, the one who does heed the voice of caution perishes anyway (namely, the bull Šatraba). As in many other examples, it is here imparted that the credulous one who places his trust in the arguments of others will end up the loser. The "completely utilitarian approach to the problems of life"[48] expressed here also dominates "Ring Dove," the chapter that immediately follows "Lion and Ox" in the *Protopañcatantra*, as well as the remaining chapters of the Indo-Persian prototype of the *KwD*.

IM imparted an entirely new orientation to this Machiavellian handbook and transformed it into a plea for justice and magnanimity, a fact which can be seen most clearly in the second chapter, entitled "Investigation of Dimna," a new addition to the book incorporated by IM himself.[49] Here Dimna, initially the hero, becomes the antihero, for instead of enjoying a triumph at the end of Chapter 1, he is repaid for his scheming and manipulation with the death penalty. The chapter begins with the king of beasts deeply regretting his terrible deed against Šatraba, who was once his most faithful and valued adviser. It is not long before he becomes suspicious of Dimna and devotes all his resources to exposing his intrigue. Finally Dimna goes to prison, is found guilty after a trial (which is described in detail), and put to death. As we already know from the first chapter, here too Dimna employs several exempla in order to manipulate his opponents. However, with his speeches he now pursues a new goal,

47 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. Cheikho, pp. 88–91.

48 De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 16–17.

49 IM's authorship of this chapter has already been established by Benfey, *Panschatantra*, p. 297, and since then it has not been doubted by scholars, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 14.

namely to convince his accusers (Kalīla, the panther, the mother lion, the leader of the pigs, the lion) of his innocence in order to save his own skin. He does not succeed at the end of the chapter, which reverses the original message of the frame story from Chapter 1: now it's the one who does not heed a warning (as Dimna did not heed the words of warning spoken by his brother Kalīla) who perishes; injustice, malice, and intrigue come to light and are requited; the one who twists words and uses exemplary stories for dishonest purposes is exposed. Especially with regard to the last point, we encounter here one of the key messages that IM wants to impart to his readers: namely, that when it comes to reading the *KwD*, one must read the book "completely and with perseverance," and that one can reveal the book's intended purpose only through probing the text more deeply. For the first two chapters this means that the real meaning, that is, the relevance of the *exempla*, will be understood only after the reader knows the outcome of the story. This also means that the morals conveyed by the individual exemplary stories can never be regarded as absolute; they only derive their validity in relation to the progression of the complete frame story. In this way, at the literary level the reader learns several things about dealing with words: a skeptical attitude toward the simple formulae for moral conduct (as taught in exemplary tales),[50] to be on the alert with people whose words are not consistent with their actions, and finally to take care not to exploit words for dishonest purposes, as that ultimately leads to destruction.

It is very likely that IM also added the last four chapters to the *KwD*. Although two of them are of Indian origin ("Traveller and Goldsmith"; "King's Son and His Companions") and the origin of the other two ("Lioness and Horseman;" Ascetic and His Guest ") is still unclear, De Blois hypothesizes (with good reason) that IM took all of them from Middle Persian prototypes. If in fact these chapters were new additions to the *KwD* made by IM, this accounts for the fact that they were not included in the earlier Syriac version and explains why their basic tenor (as in Chapter 2) fundamentally differs from that of the other chapters.[51]

IM's reworking of the political handbook in the sense described above and the book's new focus on ethical and moral education is directly connected to the ideal conception of the diversely educated, cultivated, courtly man – an ideal propagated by the *adab* movement of the ʿAbbāsids. Various components influencing this conception go hand in hand with a general Islamization of the

50 See also Forster, "Fabel und Exempel", p. 218.

51 On the provenance of these stories and the argument as to why they were authored by IM, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 14–17 and 61.

work: for example, the notion of justice and righteousness in one's conduct.[52] Likewise, the idea that the fate of human beings is controlled by God's omnipotence, or the belief that every human action in this world should be focused on the kingdom of God to come – these are components that definitely make the content of the *KwD* comprehensible to an Islamic audience.[53] At the same time, all these ideas are formulated with so little content exclusive to Islam that they could appeal equally to members of all monotheistic religions. This was exactly the case, as the wider circulation of the *KwD* throughout the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian Middle Ages attests. It clearly argues for a sense of justice shared among all "religions of the book," a sense of justice which wants the villain to suffer, the one unjustly punished to be avenged, and good to prevail over evil.

4 The Manuscript Tradition and Editions of the *KwD* and of the Derivative Versions

The large chronological gap between IM's translation of the *KwD* into Arabic and the oldest surviving Arabic manuscripts from the 13th century makes it extremely difficult to approximate how IM's original text actually looked. The issue is further complicated by the fact that a veritable boom in manuscript production occurred around the 14th century and following; because of this a very large number of manuscripts have been handed down to us that differ considerably in form and content. The narrative frame has remained more or less the same in the many different manuscripts, but the number, order, and details of the individual prefaces and chapters vary considerably, as does the *exempla* they contain. These are all clear indications for an early oral tradition and the widespread circulation of IM's former *adab* work as a vernacular text.[54] The fact that the manuscript tradition begins only very late has been justified by the fact that older manuscripts were quickly worn out on account of the *KwD*'s great popularity and had to be replaced by new ones;[55] the question of whether this is true, of course, must remain open. In any case it is clear that we are not dealing with IM's actual translation in any of the textual variants available to us, but rather with a myriad of texts that go back in one way or another

52 On the virtues of *adab* that become especially prominent in the second chapter of the *KwD*, see Hámori, A., "Shameful and Injurious".

53 On these components in the *KwD*, see Shamma, "Translating", pp. 76–78.

54 On the importance of the oral tradition of the *KwD*, see Marzolph, "Fabeln", and on orality in narrative literature in general, see the contributions by C. Cupane and C. Ott in this volume pp. 479–94 and 285–310 respectively.

55 See De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 3, n. 4, which relies upon an oral suggestion by W. Madelung.

to IM. A canonical, quasi-inviolable work never seems to have existed in this process of oral tradition; instead, each copyist and scribe could make additions, expansions, transpositions, and modifications according to his individual taste and discretion.[56] The helpful surveys of surviving manuscripts by Sprengling and especially by De Blois (the latter is more up-to-date) are thus particularly important, because to this day no critical edition of the *KwD* has been produced.[57] Only parts of the *KwD* have been edited critically thus far: namely passages from the prologues were edited by De Blois[58] and the chapter "King of Mice" by Nöldeke,[59] who has also edited a German version (with critical apparatus) of the reconstructed autobiography of Burzōē using a variety of manuscripts.[60] The editions of the complete text by De Sacy,[61] Cheikho[62] and ʿAzzām,[63] however, merely reproduce the text given in individual manuscripts, usually without drawing any connections to the other manuscripts. That the editions of Cheikho and ʿAzzām are based on the oldest known manuscripts says little about their quality or about their affinity to the archetype; on the contrary, they represent textual variants that were already far removed from the original text. In contrast, the oldest material is represented by a small group of later manuscripts that were apparently not widely circulated in the

56 As pointed out by Nöldeke, *Burzōes Einleitung,* p. 6.

57 Sprengling, "Kalîla studies I"; De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 66–72.

58 De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*: "The Man in the Well", "Shorter Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India" and "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India", pp. 73–95.

59 Nöldeke, *Mäusekönig* (with a German translation).

60 Nöldeke, *Burzōes Einleitung*.

61 On the edition by De Sacy, which is not satisfactory according to modern scholarly standards and moreover contains a version of the text far removed from the archetype, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 3, 62 and 70. It was translated into German (but without the prologues) by P. Wolff, *Kalila und Dimna. Die Fabeln des Bidpai. Mit 12 Miniaturen*, Zürich 1995 (repr. Wiesbaden 2009).

62 Cheikho edited one of the oldest known manuscripts (1338 CE), but it nevertheless does not belong to the manuscripts closest in affinity to the archetype. But because he gives the actual readings of the manuscript and in the comments cites various other versions, the edition is valuable for studying the textual history of the *KwD*. See De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 3 and 66.

63 ʿAzzāmʿs edition is based on a manuscript from Istanbul dating to 1221 CE. Although it is the oldest extant manuscript of the *KwD*, it contains a great deal of summary and is far removed from the original text. Since ʿAzzām made numerous corrections without marking them as such, in text-critical research his edition must be treated with caution, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, pp. 3f., 46 and 66. This edition has been translated into French: Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Le livre de Kalīla et Dimna. Traduit de l'arabe par* A. Miquel, Paris 1957 (repr. Paris 1980).

Arabic-speaking world. But interestingly, a number of early translations of the *KwD* into European medieval languages show a striking affinity to this archaizing recension of the Arabic text. Because this recension is primarily transmitted by translations that originated in Spain, it was termed *recensio hispanica* by Niehoff-Panagiotidis.[64] This recension includes the old Spanish translation that arose in the 13th century under Alfonso the Wise and served as the model for the Latin *Liber Regius*, which Raymond of Béziers completed in 1313 for the French queen, Joan of Navarre.[65] In addition, the fragmentary older Hebrew version written by Rabbi Joel in the 12th century is included,[66] as well as the Latin text that traces back to it – the *Directorium humanae vitae*, written by the baptized Jew, John of Capua, in the year 1270,[67] which in turn was the inspiration for numerous subsequent translations. Some of these subsequent translations include the German *Buch der Beispiele* (*Book of Exempla*), written by Anton Pforr in 1483,[68] and various English versions from the 16th century.[69] In addition, the Spaniard Petrus Alfonsi (10th–11th centuries), who converted to Christianity from Judaism, translated portions of an Arabic or Hebrew version of the *KwD* into Latin for his *Disciplina clericalis*.[70] A later Hebrew version

64 The *recensio hispanica* exhibits certain features that are also present in the mentioned group of Arabic manuscripts und resembles the older Syriac version more than the other recensions; thus, the earlier Syriac version is closer to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's original than most Arabic manuscripts, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 10. For an overview of the manuscript families and the characteristics of the *recensio hispanica*, to which belongs (among other things) the original version of the prefaces (on this see above, pp. 435–37), see Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, p. 29, and De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage,* p. 25.

65 On the old Spanish translation, see Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 47–52 (with additional bibliography). On the *Liber Regius* by Raymond of Béziers, see Kinoshita, "Translatio/n", p. 371; Hasselhoff, „Die lateinischen Übertragungen"; Regalado, "Kalila et Dimna".

66 *Deux versions hébraïques du livre de Kalîlâh et Dimnâh; la première accompagnée d'une traduction française*, ed. J. Derenbourg, Paris 1881. See Sadan, "„Schildkröte" auf Hebräisch"; Hasselhoff, "Die hebräischen Übertragungen".

67 John of Capua, *Directorium humanae vitae*, ed. V. Puntoni, Pisa 1884. S. Kühne, "Johannes von Capua".

68 See Brockelmann, "Kalīla wa-Dimna", p. 505; Bodemann-Kornhaas, "Zwischen Mensch und Tier"; Obermeier, "Das *Buch der Beispiele*" (with additional bibliography).

69 The oldest of these is by Sir Thomas North, *The Moral Philosophy of Doni, popularly known as the Fables of Bidpai*, eds. D. Beecher/J. Butler, Ottawa 2003 (with additional bibliography).

70 See Chraïbi, "De Kalîla et Dimna" pp. 52–66; Lacarra, "Las fábulas" (both with additional bibliography).

follows the same archaizing manuscript group.[71] The three extant neo-Persian versions produced between the 10th and 12th centuries diverge from this recension. These versions, in turn, served as a template for several back-translations into Arabic, which are documented in a great number of manuscripts.[72]

B The Byzantine Versions of *Kalīla wa Dimna*

In Byzantine literature we encounter three separate *KwD* translations or translation groups, which should be considered separately: the first consists of a fragmentary translation transmitted under the title *Fables of Bidpai* in the famous Pierpont Morgan manuscript from the early 11th century, the second is the translation titled *Stephanites kai Ichnilates*, which in turn is divided into a "short version" produced by Symeon Seth in the 11th century (recension A) and a "long version" from the 12th century (recension B).

1 The *Fables of Bidpai* in the Pierpont Morgan Manuscript (Codex Graecus 397)

The oldest extant Greek translation of the *KwD* survives only in fragments and can be found in a single codex produced in the Grottaferrata monastery in southern Italy during the early 11th century and now held by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Codex gr. 397).[73] In addition to the *Fables of Bidpai*, this codex contains other vernacular texts, including *The Physiologus*, a version of the *Life of Aesop* and 226 of Aesop's fables.[74] The codex is especially famous for the rich illustrations accompanying two of its texts: Aesop's fables (58 illuminations, of which only 7 were completed), and the *Fables of Bidpai* (21 illuminations).[75] The latter are miniatures accompanying the three fragmentary chapters of the *KwD* in Greek translation transmitted in the codex, namely "King's Son and His Companions", "Lioness and Horseman", and "Ascetic and His Guest". On account of the many inaccuracies and obvious scribal errors, it can be assumed that the Morgan Codex represents a mere copy of a version that already existed in this form, but

71 See above, n. 66.

72 On the Persian translations, see the detailed article by Riedel, "Kalila wa Dimna" and Haschemi, "Die persische Rezeption". See also above, n. 26.

73 Ed. Husselmann, *A Fragment*; see also the chapter by G. Karla in this volume, p. 331.

74 See Avery, "Miniatures", p. 103.

75 See Avery, "Miniatures", p. 104.

is no longer extant.[76] There is nothing to suggest that this version once contained additional chapters from the *KwD*, so the assumption is that the translator of the three chapters had in front of him an Arabic text that was already incomplete.[77] When and where this text was translated into Greek are questions that cannot be answered.[78] As Husselmann has already shown, we are dealing with a rather free adaptation and not with a literal translation from Arabic into Greek. This can be partially explained by the fact that the translator did not understand his model in some places and therefore had to fill in some details himself.[79] But an important feature of this version is its particular adaptation of the *KwD* material to the literary traditions of the Byzantines, who augmented the text (written in literary *koine*) with many Biblical quotations and at times recast it in terms of the long-standing Aesopic tradition. For example, in the chapter "Ascetic and His Guest," the exemplum of the raven who wants to imitate the way the partridge walks and ultimately loses mastery over his own gait is replaced in the Pierpont Morgan Codex by Aesop's exemplum about the raven who adorns himself with borrowed feathers and in the end stands there naked.[80]

2 The Short Version of *Stephanites kai Ichnilates* by Symeon Seth (Recension A)

The Greek translation of the *KwD* entitled *Stephanites kai Ichnilates* (= *SI*) takes a completely different path from the *Fables of Bidpai* in the Pierpont Morgan Codex. Puntoni, the first editor of this translation, has already noted the major differences between the extant manuscripts, particularly with regard to their scope. He assumed that this group of manuscripts with a translation of the full text of the *KwD* (15 chapters and 3 prologues) was the original Greek transmission by Symeon Seth mentioned in some manuscripts (11th c.) and that the manuscript group including only chapters 1–7 and parts of chapter 9[81] represents a later abridgement of the complete collection, possibly undertaken for moral reasons.[82] Under this assumption, Puntoni edited a late manuscript con-

76 Husselmann (ed), *A Fragment*, p. 14.

77 See Avery, "Miniatures", p. 104.

78 See Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, p. 35.

79 Husselmann (ed), *A Fragment*, pp. 21–22.

80 See Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, p. 35.

81 According to the sequence in the manuscript edited by Cheikho (see above, n. 9 and 14) and in the long recension (B) of *SI* (see below, pp. 453–56), so all the chapters up to "Iladh, Schadram and Iracht" and a part of "King and Bird", while the chapter "Mouse and Cat" (chapter 8 in Cheikho und in recension B of *SI*) is missing.

82 Puntoni (ed.), *Στεφανίτης καὶ Ἰχνελάτης*, pp. III-VII. See also Beck, *Geschichte*, p. 42.

taining a translation of the *KwD*'s full text and the prologues (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Laur. gr. LVII, 30, 15th c.).[83] Sjöberg then published a new edition of the *SI* according to a completely different method of organizing the 44 surviving manuscripts.[84] It is based on the short recension of the work (chapters 1–7 and parts of chapter 9), which actually appears in the oldest extant manuscripts (Laur. gr. XI, 14, 12th c. and Vat. gr. 857, 12th c.),[85] while the manuscript tradition of the complete recension (15 chapters and the prologues) does not begin until the 14th century.[86] Subsequently, the system introduced by Sjöberg – the division of the manuscripts into recension A (with the incomplete, but original text), and recension B (with the complete text, a product of later expansion) – is considered to be common sense in modern scholarship. The assumed gradual expansion of the *SI* over time also corresponds exactly to the tradition-historical developments of most other narrative material of a folktale nature.[87]

As we learn from the oldest surviving manuscript of the *SI*, the translation of the original Greek text (thus recension A), was commissioned by the order of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118).[88] The *philosophos* and *magistros* Symeon Seth (i.e., a court official in Constantinople) is mentioned in numerous other manuscripts as the translator. He can also be identified with the identically named physician who was probably born in Antioch and authored scientific and medical writings in the second half of the 11th century.[89] This author, a master of Syrian and Arabic, is therefore one of those typical intellectual "border crossers" who was best suited for translating scholarly and literary material from one language into the other, and also from one culture into another. Insofar as Symeon Seth also performed this transfer of knowledge in the service of a ruler, namely Alexios Komnenos, there are a number of striking parallels between him and IM, who indeed translated the *KwD* into Arabic at the command of the ʿAbbāsid caliph. The translation of the material

83 On this manuscript, see Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 29 and 47.

84 Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*.

85 On these manuscripts, see Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 28 and 40.

86 A list and description of all the manuscripts is provided by Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 24–54, and Condylis-Bassoukos, *Stéphanitès*, pp. XXVII–XXVIII.

87 As was already demonstrated for the history of transmission of the Arabic *KwD*, see above, pp. 435 and pp. 445–48. On other folktale material with similar developments in their transmission history, see the contributions in this volume, including the chapters on the *Alexander* material, on *Digenis*, and on Arabic epic.

88 Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, p. 7; Beck, *Geschichte*, p. 41.

89 On Symeon Seth and his work, see Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 87–99; Beck, *Geschichte*, pp. 41–42; Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 37–38 (with additional bibliography).

first by IM and then by Symeon Seth, as well as various subsequent translations of the *KwD* at the command of other rulers (e.g., Alfonso X of Castile [the Wise], the French queen Joan of Navarre, the Ilkhanid rulers of Persia in the 14th century), shows that this material was exceptionally well suited for a *translatio studii* in the sense of a *translatio imperii*.[90] A text that was designed from the very beginning as a mirror for princes (i.e., as a handbook for the ruler) and at the same time was suitable as an edifying textbook for the masses was predestined to be included by rulers of different nations in their political and cultural programs; this was done in order to situate their claim to power in the tradition of previous potentates. As was already made clear in the case of the *KwD* by IM, it is typical of such a *translatio studii* that it be produced as a translation in the sense of "cultural recoding" rather than as a literal translation. The basic requirement for the adoption of the *KwD* into the canon of Byzantine literature was already fulfilled by IM, since he had adapted the ethical and moral frame for a general monotheistic readership in the spirit of *adab* (as described earlier); it was therefore far enough removed from the Indo-Persian original. In addition to the aforementioned notions of law and justice through the addition of Chapter 2, the adaptation of the *KwD* for a more general monotheistic audience is further demonstrated by the repeatedly emphasized thoughts on the afterlife, which are already so pronounced in the Arabic text that it could conceivably be endorsed by an orthodox Byzantine reader.[91] This is manifest already at the beginning of the *KwD* and the *SI*, where in the frame story of the first chapter ("Lion and Ox") an ancient merchant lectures his lazy sons who did not want to learn a trade by saying that a man should strive after three things, namely wealth, a good reputation in the eyes of others, and treasures in the life to come.[92]

On the basis of IM's work, Symeon Seth created a translation of the *KwD* into Greek – a translation aligned with the literary traditions and tastes of Byzantine readers.[93] In order to accomplish this, he translated the document into classical *koine* with numerous allusions and quotations from ancient poetry, the

90 On this topic see, Kinoshita, "Translatio/n", which gives other textual examples for a *translatio studii* in the sense of a *translatio imperii*.

91 On this topic, see Condylis-Bassoukos, *Stéphanites*, pp. 151–66. On ideas concerning the afterlife in the *KwD*, see also p. 446.

92 *Stephanites kai Ichnilates*, ed. Sjöberg, p. 151. An incorrect interpretation of this passage may be found in Kazhdan, "Seth", p. 1883. On this passage in the *Pañcatantra*, see De Blois, *Burzōy's voyage*, p. 23.

93 A detailed lexicographical and literary study of Symeon Seth's translation is available by Condylis-Bassoukos, *Stéphanites* (with a synoptic list of the chapters and stories of the Arabic and Greek editions on pp. 211–17).

Bible, and the church fathers. He avoided the exotic flavor imparted by Arabisms; instead, he incorporated Latin loanwords. His attempts to produce a completely Hellenized translation of the work are also reflected in the names, something obvious even in the title alone. In the names Kalīla and Dimna, he identified the Arabic roots *iklīl* ("wreath," "crown") and *dimna* ("trace," "hint") and translated them with the Greek *Stephanites* ("wreath-bringing") and *Ichnilates* ("the one pursuing the trace/hint").[94] Apart from that, he consistently avoided translating the many proper names belonging to animals in the Arabic text; this can be explained by the fact that it was uncommon in the Greek mythical tradition to give animals names.[95] For instance, in Chapter 8 ("King and Bird") the exotic bird named *Fanza* or *Qubirra* becomes a simple magpie (*kissa*).[96] Aside from Stephanites and Ichnilates, the few proper names that Symeon used (always for people), he replaced with names that were familiar from his own tradition. For example, the Indian king *Dabšalīm* became the Old Testament *Abesalom*. Also particularly striking are the structural changes that Symeon Seth made in comparison with the Arabic original. By omitting numerous subordinate narratives, expanding the second narrative level to a large extent, and completely leaving out the third, he spread out the interwoven individual *exempla* (so characteristic of the Arabic *KwD*) to create a more straightforward narrative flow. As Niehoff-Panagiotidis has shown based on chapter four ("Owls and Crows"), Symeon Seth adapted the work to the expectations that a Byzantine reader educated in ancient rhetoric around the year 1100 would have had.[97] It is clear from the *Life of Aesop*, the *Syntipas* and *Barlaam and Ioasaph* that the contemporary Byzantine reader was already familiar with a similar kind of narrative structure, i.e., an epically broad exemplary story on the first narrative level and brief individual *exempla* to illustrate it.[98] Thus, Symeon Seth changed the Arabic *KwD* on both the macro and the micro level to such an extent that, if we take the modern requirements of a translation as a starting point, it is more accurate to speak of it as an inde-

94 See Brockelmann, "Kalīla wa-Dimna", p. 506.

95 See Condylis-Bassoukos, *Stéphanites*, p. 109.

96 Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. Cheikho, p. 211, line 6 (here with the name Fanza); ed. 'Azzām, p. 237, line 6 (here with the name Qubirra); S*tephanites kai Ichnilates*, ed. Sjöberg, p. 242, line 8.

97 Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 117–23.

98 Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, p. 123, who however excludes (the collection of parables from) *Barlaam und Ioasaph* from this narrative tradition without good reason. Concerning the works mentioned, see also the contributions in this volume by R. Volk, I. Toth and B. Krönung.

pendent work than as merely a translation.[99] Because of this fact, it would be futile to try to identify the direct model(s) of Symeon Seth among the many Arabic manuscripts of the *KwD*.[100] Symeon Seth's short recension (A) of the Greek *SI* remains a singular phenomenon in the history of the *KwD*'s transmission. In its role as a model for further editions of the work, it should only be relevant for the later Byzantine recension B, and not for translations into other languages. Only the so-called later Syriac version of the *KwD* (probably produced in the 10th or 11th century) shows a striking affinity to Symeon's text (e.g., the lack of prologues, Christianization of the text through the use of many Biblical quotations).[101] However, this can be explained more by a similar intellectual environment in the translator's place of origin, i.e., the border between Byzantium and the Islamic caliphate, than by a direct relationship between the two versions.[102]

3 The Long Version of *Stephanites kai Ichnilates* (Recension B)

The so-called long version of the *SI*, also known as recension B, includes all 15 chapters and three prologues of the Arabic version and is available to us via Puntoni's *editio princeps*.[103] Sjöberg, the editor of recension A, identified that recension B is a later expansion of Symeon Seth's translation, and divided the manuscripts into six subrecensions (δ, ε, ζ, η, θ, ι).[104] The paramount importance of subrecensions Bε, the so-called *recensio Eugeniana*, to the transmission history was recognized early on. In several of the manuscripts belonging to this recension (also in the manuscript edited by Puntoni, see above pp. 449–50), Eugenios of Palermo (1130–1203) is named as the one who commissioned the work. Although ultimately the question must remain open as to what role he played in the development of the *recensio Eugeniana*, his direct participation in it, at least, is very likely, as we can speculate from the various biographical

99 On the problem of incautiously using modern conceptions regarding translation to examine premodern texts, see Shamma, "Translating into the Empire".

100 Condylis-Bassoukos, *Stephanites*, pp. 26–27; Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, p. 118, and Hámori, "Shameful", p. 192, have identified at certain points a relative affinity to the manuscript edited by Cheikho.

101 W. Wright, *The Book of Kalilah and Dimnah translated from Arabic into Syriac*, Oxford, 1884.

102 On the similarities and differences of these two versions, see Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 32–33.

103 The three prologues translated in this recension are the "Longer Version of Burzōē's Voyage to India", "The Introduction of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ", and the "Life of Burzōē". The order of the chapters corresponds to the manuscript edited by Cheikho, see above, pp. 434–38, and n. 9 and 14.

104 Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 61–78.

information about him. Thus we know about his multilingualism, typical for Norman Sicily in his time, which made it possible for him to compose vibrant translations of and into the Greek, Arabic, and Latin languages. Eugenios' literary production and his particular proximity to the Norman dynasty in Sicily (in whose service he held various administrative offices and was appointed Admiral in 1190) shows in turn striking parallels to the biographies of Symeon Seth and IM.[105] Here too we are dealing with a polyglot intellectual situated at a cultural crossroads, whose proximity to the ruling dynasty may have been a decisive factor as to the primary goal of the adaptation of the *KwD*. Once again it is clear that the special appeal of the *KwD* was not only on account of its entertainment value, but primarily stemmed from the fact that the work was understood and accepted as a "real" (i.e., not purely literary) mirror for princes. It is all the more astonishing that the *SI* is disregarded or even altogether ignored in the scholarly discussion of the mirror for princes in Byzantium.[106] Thus in the formation of the Byzantine *SI*, we are faced with a double *translatio studii*, which first took place in 11th-century Constantinople, and then again in Norman Sicily around the year 1200. The editor of the *recensio Eugeniana* once more created a work that differs vastly from the *SI* of Symeon Seth and again consulted the Arabic original for this purpose. He indeed used the existing translation of the *SI* by Symeon Seth as the basis for his edition and supplemented it with the rest of the chapters and the prologues from the *KwD*. But his own contribution goes far beyond merely adding the passages missing from Symeon Seth's version. He rendered his model into vernacular idiomatic speech characteristic of southern Italy and Sicily, as lexical details (e.g., the use of Romance loanwords) show. Based on the model of one (or more) Arabic manuscripts of the complete work, he revised, supplemented, and expanded recension A further in the sense of a "back-assimilation" to the Arabic *KwD*. This is manifest by the fact that he reinstituted the complicated nesting technique by reinserting all the stories taken out by Symeon Seth and also adding back the connective tissue that is of utmost importance to the cohesion of the text.[107] But it is also apparent in exotic names borrowed here from the Arabic text, e.g., *Chosroes 'Anasouranos*. The Indian king that Symeon Seth called by

105 On Eugenios of Palermo and his literary work, see Jamison, *Admiral Eugenios*; Falkenhausen, "Eugenio da Palermo", and now especially Cupane, "Eugenios von Palermo".

106 Thus by Prinzing, "Beobachtungen", p. 6. The *SI* goes entirely unnoted by Odorico, "miroirs", and Reinsch, "Bemerkungen".

107 See Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 117–29.

the Old Testament name *Abesalom* is now *Desalom*, an assimilation back to the Arabic model, which has *Dabšalīm*.[108]

Only for another subrecension of recension B, namely Bδ, is it possible to show that it originated independently of the *recensio Eugeniana* and involved direct engagement with an Arabic prototype; all other subrecensions can be traced in one form or another back to Bε or Bδ. Unlike the editor of Bε, the editor of Bδ – probably a scholar from Constantinople during the first half of the 12th century – followed Symeon Seth's model very closely. The main innovations he made in comparison to Symeon Seth are limited to the completion of the truncated chapter "King and Bird" and the addition of the chapters "Lioness and Horseman" and "King of Mice"; the remaining chapters and prologues are missing here as well. The chapters translated by Symeon Seth – including the simplified narrative structure – he has left alone, for the most part. It is clear that another Arabic manuscript (or manuscript group) must have been available to him as the editor of *recensio Eugeniana,* since in the latter, chapter 11 ("King of Mice") is missing.[109]

An edition of recension B adhering to modern standards of scholarship and dealing with the subrecensions Bε and Bδ as independent texts (which should be clearly distinguished from recension A) is still a desideratum, as is a translation (of both recensions) of the *SI* into a modern scholarly language.

Overall, recension B of the *SI* likewise plays a rather insignificant role in the broader transmission history. Nevertheless a few early translations of it exist – for instance, the translation into Old Church Slavonic dating to the 13th–14th centuries, which is a more or less direct translation of the Bδ-recension.[110] The Italian translation titled *Del governo dei regni*, which dates to the 16th century and was probably done by Domenico Patrizzi da Cherso, also goes back in large part to the Bδ-recension, although it contains the three prologues.[111] In addition, a Latin translation (the so-called Greek-Latin version) was transmitted that is very similar to the Bε-recension. It may have been produced in Sicily shortly after the version by Eugenios of Palermo, perhaps during the reign of Frederick II (1220–1250).[112] There are also two modern Greek paraphrases

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108 See Condylis-Bassoukos, *Stéphanitès*, pp. 110–11; Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 87–88.

109 On recension Bδ, see Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 68–78. Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 41, 92–93 and 123.

110 Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 112–114; Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 42–43.

111 Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 116–20; Sternai Saraceno, *Kalila et Dimna*.

112 A. Hilka, *Beiträge zur lateinischen Erzählungsliteratur des Mittelalters*, vol. II: *Eine lateinische Übersetzung der griechischen Version des Kalila-Buches*, Berlin 1928. On this translation, see Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites*, pp. 114–16. An early dating of this translation, perhaps

made by the patriarchate official Theodosius Zygomalas in the 16th century and the doctor D. Prokopios in the 18th century, as well as perhaps another fragmentary modern Greek version of the 16th century – all of which go back to later subrecensions of the B recension.[113]

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113 L. Stephou, *Die neugriechische Metaphrase von Stephanites und Ichnelates durch Theodosios Zygomalas* (Nueva Roma 35), Madrid 2011. The modern Greek fragments have been edited by N. Eideneier, "Δύο μῦθοι ἀπὸ τὸν «Στεφανίτη καὶ Ἰχνηλάτη» σὲ δημώδη γλῶσσα", Ἑλληνικά 20 (1967), 430–35. S. Sjöberg (ed.), *Stephanites* pp. 122–36; Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung*, pp. 45–47.

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PART 4

Between Literacy and Orality: Audience and Reception of Fictional Literature

CHAPTER 18

"I grasp, oh, artist, your enigma, I grasp your *drama*": Reconstructing the Implied Audience of the Twelfth-Century Byzantine Novel*

Panagiotis Roilos

As is the case with many Byzantine texts, the precise dates of the Komnenian novels remain more or less open to debate. Their production most probably spanned the years from the late 1130s to the late 1150s, the order of their composition having been as follows: 1). *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* by Theodore Prodromos before 1138, 2). *Aristandros and Kallithea* by Constantine Manasses in the 1140s, 3). *Hysmine and Hysminias* by Eumathios Makrembolites in 1143-mid-1150s and 4). *Drosilla and Charikles* by Niketas Eugenianos in the late 1150s.[1] Those texts were the products of a vibrant intellectual environment, which fostered a systematic revival of a number of ancient Greek genres and discursive modes.[2] The appropriation of elements of the ancient Greek tradition (most notably of literature and mythology) by the novelists invested their works with considerable cultural capital, which could be appropriately marketed and evaluated in the elite social and cultural circles of Constantinople. The rediscovery and adaptation of the pagan "Hellenic" heritage to the Christian medieval Greek present was often defined by a broader cultural and discursive stance that should be described in terms of *amphoteroglossia* ("double-tonguedness").[3]

Although in Byzantium the ancient Greek novel had been the object of noteworthy rhetorical and moralistic approaches in previous centuries as well, the creative engagement with fictional writing of that kind had to wait until the Komnenian period, a considerable part of which could be described in

* For Jacques Bouchard, dear friend and colleague.

1 For relevant arguments, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 7–11, where also earlier bibliography; cf. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*. Landmarks of the early study of the Komnenian novels include Alexiou, "A Critical Reappraisal"; Hunger, *Antikes und byzantinisches Roman*; Beck, *Byzantinisches Erotikon*.

2 For the broader cultural context of the Komnenian period with an emphasis on the reign of Manuel I, see Magdalino, *The Empire*; cf. Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 4–13; Kazhdan / Wharton Epstein, *Change*.

3 On the concept of *amphoteroglossia*, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia,* esp. pp. 15–24.

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terms of a cultural Renaissance. The elucidation of the issue of the possible synchronic recipients of the Komnenian novels, their educational and social status, and their expectations is of major importance for our scholarly exploration of the "worldliness" of those texts – of the conditions, that is, of their production, circulation, and consumption in their original historical contexts. The reconstruction of their intended audience constitutes a crucial parameter of any study that aspires to go beyond traditional formalistic analyses and to address, instead, issues of historical anthropological relevance, including the "ethnography of the vehicles of meaning" activated by those works.[4]

The specific audiences of the 12th-century Byzantine novel may to some extent, albeit hypothetically, be reconstructed on the basis of evidence gleaned indirectly from the texts themselves and from certain paratextual information originating from the authors or from later scribes.[5] Relevant extratextual sources are almost nonexistent, with the exception of a "letter" composed by Niketas Eugenianos and addressed to a certain "grammatike," a lady of perplexing identity. In that letter, Niketas attests to the appeal that his novel could have to particular members of his contemporary audience.[6] The letter provides no conclusive information about the specific social, family, or any other background (except for the educational one) of that lady. Even the very factuality and the name of that passionate female reader of *Drosilla and Charikles* cannot be established beyond any reasonable doubt. Be that as it may, what can be said with certainty is that the (actual or imagined) female addressee of Eugenianos' letter is depicted as exceptionally educated, familiar with, and capable of appreciating the aesthetic effect of, different sophisticated poetic meters. In the case she was a real person, Eugenianos' *eromene grammatike* seems to have belonged to that category of 12th-century women who fostered and encouraged the production of (often "high") literary works and other cul-

4 For the need of a historical anthropological approach to premodern literature in general and to Byzantine cultural production in particular, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 23–24; also Roilos; "Phantasia". For literature's worldliness, see Said, *The World, the Text*, pp. 33–35. As I have argued elsewhere (Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, p. 23), an "ethnography of the vehicles of meaning" (on this concept see Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, pp. 118–19) of a literary text of the past elucidates the ways in which that work might have been composed and received in its original context in terms of a synthesis and activation of different cultural textures. For the concept of the "intended reader", see Wolff, "Der intendierte Leser".

5 The term "paratext" refers to those elements of the physical presentation of a literary work that surround ("para"-) the corpus of the main text: see Genette, *Paratexts*.

6 Ed. in J.-F. Boissonade, *Nicetae Eugeniani narratio amatoria et Constantini Manassis fragmenta*, Paris 1817, pp. 7–10.

tural activities.[7] Although the letter describes her request to Eugenianos that he compose and send "erotic verses" to her in terms of a fervent admirer's appeal rather than a commission involving recompense, her (actual or fictional) role in that author's poetic career is very close to that of a patroness.

One of the four extant manuscripts of Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* (Palatinus Graecus 43, 14th c.) preserves a dedicatory epigram addressed by the author to an anonymous "Caesar." Current scholarly consensus is that, as first Elizabeth Jeffreys suggested,[8] its addressee was Nikephoros Vryennios, Anna Komnene's husband, who died in 1138. In addition to its significance for the dating of *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* (1138 or more precisely 1136, the year Vryennios left Constantinople to join a military expedition in Syria, appears to be a safe *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the novel), this dedication provides important information about the conditions of the synchronic reception of the Komnenian novels, since it confirms that members of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy belonged to their intended and actual audience. Furthermore, one of the novelists, Eumathios Makrembolites, belonged himself to an aristocratic family and was elevated to high public offices.[9]

The Komnenian novels were written in archaizing Greek and as a rule in a sophisticated rhetorical style. Three of them were composed in verse (*Rhodanthe and Dosikles* and *Drosilla and Charikles* in iambic meter; *Aristandros and Kallithea* in political verse) and only *Hysmine and Hyminias* in prose. The Patriarch Photios' and Psellos' comments on the ancient Greek novel leave no doubt that in Byzantium that genre was often conceived of and received in terms of rhetorical discourse, as this had been codified especially by late-antiquity rhetoricians such as Hermogenes, Menander the Rhetor, and the theorists

7 On patronage in 12th-century Constantinople, see Magdalino, *The Empire*, pp. 335–56, Mullett, "Aristocracy and Patronage". In the mid-12th c. the Sevastokratorissa Eirene played a central role in the Constantinopolitan intellectual scene as a patroness of several literati, see Jeffreys, "The Sebastokratorissa Eirene as a Literary Patroness" and "The *sebastokatorissa* Eirene as a Patron", as well as Jeffreys/ Jeffreys, "Who was Eirene?". Highly educated 12th-century literati would also produce poetry in the vernacular, as the works of Ptochoprodromos and Michael Glykas indicate. On Ptochoprodromos, see Alexiou, "Ploys of Performance"; his works are available in H. Eideneier, *Ptochoprodromos*, (Neograeca Medii Aevi, 5), Cologne 1991 (reprint with expanded edition in Greek: Iraklion 2012); for Glykas' *Poem from Prison*, see E. Tsolakes, *Μιχαὴλ Γλυκᾶ στίχοι οὓς ἔγραψεν καθ᾽ὃν κατεσχέθη καιρόν*, Thessalonike 1959.

8 Jeffreys, "A Date", followed by Agapitos, "Poets and Painters"; cf. Jeffreys, "The Novels ".

9 For a summary of current views on the identity of the author of *Hysmine and Hysminias*, see Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 159–60.

of *progymnasmata* (rhetorical exercises).[10] In the 12th century, Gregory Pardos[11] and John Phokas also commented on the "graces" of Heliodorus' and Achilles Tatius' novels in terms of rhetorical compositions. Especially Phokas' reference in his *Description of the Holy Land* to Tatius' *ekphrasis* of the harbor of Sidon as a paradigmatic example of that specific rhetorical subgenre[12] leaves no doubt that 12th-century readers would often read the ancient Greek (and most probably their contemporary, Komnenian) novels as primarily rhetorical works consisting of quasi-autonomous parts comparable to progymasmatic compositions. Particularly revealing is also the fact that a catalogue of authors recommended for educational purposes preserved in a 13th-century manuscript includes Heliodorus and more reluctantly Tatius.[13]

Of special interest with regard to the probable terms of reception of the Komnenian novels are the marginal annotations preserved in their manuscripts. The majority of those annotations confirm the impression created by Phokas' praise of Tatius' *ekphrasis* of the harbor of Sidon: they indicate that the Komnenian novels too were often perceived as narrative wholes consisting of potentially self-contained sections comparable to different types of *progymnasmata* (exercises), most notably *ethopoiia* (character study), *ekphrasis* (description), *diegema* (narration), or *gnome* (maxim). For instance, a manuscript of *Hysmine and Hysminias* preserved from a period relatively close to the composition of the novel, Vaticanus Graecus 1390 (13th century), includes marginal notes such as: "*ekphrasis* of the garden", "*ekphrasis* of the well", "*ekphrasis* of Hysmine", "*ekphrasis* of the virtues", "*narrative*", "*maxim*". Quite often laments in the novels are described as such in the manuscripts, and, occasionally, sophisticated sections of the texts are singled out and praised as particularly "beautiful" (ὡραῖον). Similar paratextual signs are found in the manuscripts of the other Komnenian novels as well as of the ancient Greek examples of the genre; e.g. in the abovementioned manuscript (Vaticanus Graecus 1390), Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, which follows Makrembolites' novel, is accompanied by similar marginal annotations.[14] Manuscript tradition as early as the 13th century confirms therefore that medieval readers tended to receive and

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10 For the reception of the ancient Greek novel in rhetorical terms in Byzantium, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 32–50.

11 Ed. D. Donnet, *Le traité Περὶ συντάξεως λόγου de Grégoire de Corinthe. Étude de la tradition manuscrite*, Brussels 1967, p. 321, p. 34.

12 Ed. in *Patrologia graeca* 133, 932D.

13 Jerusalem Taphos 106, 6v-7r.

14 For a discussion of such evidence in the manuscript tradition, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 48–50, 65, 85–87, 276, 291–92. Conca, "Scribi e lettori", provides useful information mainly about Niketas Eugenianos's novel.

evaluate the Komnenian novels mainly, but of course not exclusively in rhetorical terms. This view is further corroborated by the reception of the *ancient* Greek novels by Byzantine literati, as I observed above. A good case in point is Psellos' appreciation of the *epeisodia diegemata* (episodic narratives) of the *Aethiopica*,[15] all the more since that Byzantine intellectual was very familiar with (but not always loyal to) Hermogenes' rhetorical principles, as for instance his "*ethopoiia*" of the empress Zoe in his *Chronographia* suggests.[16]

The application of rhetorical criteria to the aesthetic evaluation of the genre persisted in the later centuries of Byzantium. Writing in the 14th century, Joseph Rhakendytes recommended Achilles Tatius' and Heliodorus' works as prototypical paradigms for the composition of works of "narrative rhetorical subject matters". The significance of Rhakendytes' statement lies not only in its emphasis on the rhetorical dimensions of those texts but also in the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, it provides the first (indirect) overarching description that may be applied only to that particular genre, thus going beyond the potential ambiguity of previous terminological categorizations such as *drama* or *plasma*.[17] The same rhetorician provides some interesting but neglected instructions about the "proper" reading of literary texts in general.[18] Rhakendytes' instructions confirm that sophisticated Byzantines, like the ones that most probably constituted a large portion of the original audience of the Komennian novels, tended to receive and evaluate literary works in terms of rhetoric.

The aesthetic refinement that the Komnenian novelists communicated to an audience which was expected to acknowledge and appreciate it accordingly is, to my view, exhibited particularly in their abundant, direct or indirect,

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15 See the remarks on Heliodorus in Michael Psellos, *Essays* (ed. A. Dyck, *Michael Psellus, The Essays on Euripides and George of Pisidia and on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* [Byzantina Vindobonensia, 16], Vienna 1986, p. 92, 31–32). I discuss Psellos' views about the *epeisodia diegemata* in Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 44–46, 50.

16 Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* v 22, (ed. D.R. Reinsch, *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia*, 2 vols. [Millennium Studien / Millennium Studies, 52], Berlin-Boston 2014, p. 91, 10–92, 22. On that section of the *Chronographia*, see Schissel's still useful observations in Schissel, "Die Ethopoie der Zoe". Aspects of Psellos' approach to Hermogenes are discussed in Dyck, *Michael Psellus*, pp. 31–33.

17 Available in *Rhetores Graeci*, ed. Walz, vol. 3, p. 521, 21–22. For Rhakendytes' view on the novel, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, p. 48. In Greek it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that a generally accepted term was introduced: *mythistoria*; see Roilos, "The Poetics of Mimicry".

18 *Rhetores Graeci*, ed. Walz, vol. 3, pp. 562, 16–563, 20; For Rhakendytes' ideas see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 61–62.

meta-discursive comments. All the three fully preserved 12th-century novels are replete with such references, which, especially in *Hysmine and Hysminias* and in *Drosilla and Charikles*, often activate multilayered amphoteroglossic associations. Leaving aside its close connections with ancient examples of the genre, especially with Achilles Tatius,[19] *Hysmine and Hysminias*, I argue, was to a great extent composed as a narrative riddle, the decipherment of which operates mainly on two interpretive levels: on the textual level, the protagonists (most notably the love-struck hero) are engaged in a gradual decoding of several allegorical representations and overarching conceptual and structural categories (e.g. "eros" and "eris"); on the extratextual level, the audience is invited to follow actively the characters' involvement in that hermeneutic game but also to locate and stitch together the novel's numerous allusions to different, at times even antithetical (pagan and Christian) literary and broader cultural intertexts.[20] The enigmatic nature of that work and the need for a dynamic participation of the audience in its decipherment is tellingly indicated in a manuscript (Mediceus Laurentianus Acquisti e Doni 341; 15th c.),[21] where it is stated that Makrembolites' "composition" is "insoluble and difficult to be understood by the ignorant ones". In this respect it should be stressed that Eumathios Makrembolites was also known as the author of a collection of riddles.[22]

The enigmatic character of the novel is further supplemented and complicated by a number of allegorical modulations later in the story, which is in general narrated in a rhetorical style very close to the Hermogenean "Idea" of "Dignity" (*semnotes*).[23] Those modulations and their rhetorical sophistication would have required well-educated readers, capable of properly appreciating them. In addition to its subtle allusions to Christian literary and theological

19 For Makrembolites' debts to Achilles Tatius, see Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos*.

20 For this aspect of Makrembolites' novel and its historical context and intertext, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 139–203.

21 For this manuscript, see Cataldi Palau, "La tradition manuscrite", p. 76; see also Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 137–38. The popularity of Makrembolites' novel is attested by its very rich manuscript tradition (see Cataldi Palau, ibid.); for aspects of the reception of the same text in early modern European literatures, cf. Beaton, "Hopeful Monsters"; Nilsson, "In response to Charming Passions", ead., "Les amours d'Ismène & Isménias".

22 Ed. M. Treu, *Eustathii Macrembolitae quae feruntur aenigmata*, Breslau 1893.

23 For this aspect of Makrembolites' novel, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 196–203. According to the 2nd-century rhetor Hermogenes, "Dignity" (*semnotes*) refers to the use of elevated style and diction as well as to topics related to divine and other transcendental matters.

tradition, *Hysmine and Hysminias* is replete with intertextual references to major texts of Greek antiquity, including most notably the epics and tragedy. Of special interest is Makrembolites' use of the Hesiodic poems, which provide him not only with specific literary intertexts but also with notions that he uses as overarching structural principles.[24] The narrator's self-referential comments reach their culmination at the end of the novel. After a number of "unsuccessful" appeals to different gods to immortalize his erotic adventures, the narrator resorts to the power of writing to produce monuments that transcend time's destructive effects. Hermes' eloquence will eventually grant Hysminias' narrative the transhistorical dynamism it deserves.[25]

The narrator's self-awareness and his sense of belonging to a long literary tradition is further corroborated by some subtle intertextual allusions at the end of his narrative to the history of the genre. The reference to the writing of his story on "unfading wood" and its eloquent transcription by someone in the future in the form of an immortal verbal monument seems to allude to the convoluted framing of Antonius Diogenes' *The Wonders beyond Thule*.[26] The very end of *Hysmine and Hysminias*, which is addressed to different potential groups of readers, reenacts a *topos* well-known at least since Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*: all members of the audience will be pleased by Makrembolites' work, since it addresses the desires of all those who are either erotically disposed or more continent, or more sympathetic toward dramatic situations.

24 See Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 171–75, 178, 192. Hesiod's works were particularly popular in the 12th c., as for instance Tzetzes' commentaries on them indicate (available in I. Bekker, "Die Theogonie des Johannes Tzetzes aus der Bibliotheca Casanatensis herausgegeben", *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin*, 1840, pp. 147–69; A. Colonna, "I Prolegomeni a Esiodo e la Vita esiodea di Giovanni Tzetzes", *Bollettino dei classici greci e latini* 2 (1953), 27–40; see also Dahlén, *Zu Johannes Tzetzes Exegesis*). The significant allegorical interpretation of *Theogony* by John Diakonos Galenos was most probably composed in the same century; see Roilos, "Unshapely Bodies".

25 Eumathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminas* 11, 23. 4, ed. Marcovich, pp. 151, 19–152, 3.

26 A relatively detailed summary of Diogenes' novel is provided by Patriarch Photios, *Bibliotheca*, cod 166, 111a.20–111b, ed. Henry, vol. 2, who focuses on the work's exceptionally elaborate narrative structure. A similar motif is also found in the *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon Ephesius 5.15.2 as well: here the story of the heroes' adventures is written on a marble slab which is subsequently dedicated to Artemis; see Cupane "Una passeggiata", p. 83 and n. 119.

Makrembolites' reference to the chastity of his protagonists, despite its literary history, assumes marked moral connotations if read within the Christian author's synchronic religious and cultural context. Byzantine defenders of the genre emphasized the ethical fortitude of the protagonists. Indicative of this approach is, for instance, the allegorical interpretation of Heliodorus' story by Philippos the Philosopher,[27] according to which Charikleia, Heliodorus' heroine, is the allegorical embodiment of temperance. A similar display of this virtue is put forward by Rhodanthe, the female protagonist of Theodore Prodromos' novel. In a solitary pathetic *ethopoiia*, Rhodanthe, lamenting for her separation from her beloved Dosikles and reinforcing her decision to remain loyal to him until death despite present vicissitudes, presents herself as an exemplum of morality (7, 117–119. 122–123). Rhodanthe seems to ventriloquize the author's own understanding of his heroine's moral stature, especially his focusing on her temperance (*sophrosyne*),[28] as well as the expectations of his intended audience. In fact, an epigram on Heliodorus' Charikleia, which has been attributed to Theodore Prodromos himself, highlights her exemplary behavior in a way recalling Rhodanthe's self-praise.[29]

Epigrams on the Komnenian novels preserved in their manuscripts allow us a glimpse into a different but similarly moralizing attitude toward their erotic stories on the part of their medieval readership. For instance, a series of "verses" on *Hysmine and Hysminias* focus on the hero's (rather than the heroine's) passionate love, that results in many misfortunes. The readers are instructed to receive Hysminias' story as a fictional deterrent against erotic love. This is of course a misreading of the novel, because the ordeals that the two lovers encounter are eventually overcome and result in their paradigmatic happy (re) union, which, according to the hero himself, deserves to be immortalized

27 For the text of this allegorical interpretation, see A. Colonna, *Heliodori Aethiopica*, Rome 1938, pp. 366–367; for its authorship and date, see Colonna, "Teofane Cerameo", Cupane, "Filagato da Cerami", Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, p. 130. Acconcia Longo, "Filippo il filosofo" and "La questione Filippo il filosofo", which argues for a 5th-century dating, is unconvincing. For a detailed discussion of the allegorization of ancient Greek fiction in Byzantium, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 130–39.

28 For the importance of *sophrosyne* in the Komnenian novels, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 106–7, 158–60, 173–75, 183–89.

29 Colonna, *Heliodori Aethiopica*, p. 372. Another epigram on Tatius' novel, which is attributed to the Patriarch Photios or to Leo the Philosopher, similarly extolls the temperance especially of the heroine but also of her beloved: see E. Vilborg, *Achilles Tatius, Leucippe and Clitophon,* Stockholm 1955, p. 163.

through Hermes' art.[30] Verses on Rhodanthe's erotic adventures are of a similar moralistic spirit;[31] more balanced is an epigram on Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles*, since it refers to the happy end (marriage) of the protagonists' love adventures.[32] The reserved attitude toward love narratives attested in these epigrams found an interesting literary development in the allegorical poem *On Chastity* by Theodore Meliteniotes, written around two centuries after the Komnenian novels. The innovation of Meliteniotes' work lies in the fact that it provides an explicitly critical reading of the alleged immorality of previous love stories while, at the same time, adjusting inherited novelistic generic modulations to its ideological and ethical agenda.[33]

The condemnation of licentiousness and the emphasis by contrast on pure love and chastity is of course one of the main themes of the novels themselves, not only of those short poetic commentaries on them or of Meliteniotes' text. *Drosilla and Charikles* provides a highly original reworking of the *topos* of *sophrosyne.* In an inventive twist of novelistic conventions, a rustic counter-hero, ironically named Kallidemos, indulges in a rhetorical exposition of his desire for chaste Drosilla. His speech should be read as a parody of the rhetorical subgenre of ethopoia.[34] In a rather provocative subversion of moral and novelistic expectations, he first refers to two cases of aggressive carnal love from Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* (6. 388–90) and then to literary examples of chaste love (*erotas sophronisantas*) that resulted in the legitimate union of the two lovers, including the paradigm of Daphnis and Chloe.

The episode of Kallidemos' allegedly refined but ultimately vulgar flirting with Drosilla in Eugenianos' work is one of many examples in the Komnenian novels of the co-existence of diverse, even antithetical discourses. Polarities that are eventually integrated into overarching discursive syntheses in these texts include, for instance, the following: elevated/"low"; pagan/Christian; serious/comical; allegorical/grotesque; sensual/spiritual, etc. The most interesting juxtapositions of such antitheses occur at narrative intervals that introduce

30 See Eumathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich, p. xxiii-

31 See Theodore Prodromos, *Rodanthe and Dosikles*, ed. Marcovich, p. 163.

32 See Niketas Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles, ed. Conca,* p. 30.

33 The poem is available in Miller, *Poème allégorique*; see also the chapter by C. Cupane in this volume, pp. 118–19.

34 *Drosilla and Charikles* 6, 440–51. On this scene in Eugenianos' novel and its multilayered intertexts, see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 68–79; cf. Milazzo, "Motivi bucolici", Burton, "A reemergence of Theocritean Poetry". On this episode see also the chapter by I. Nilsson in this volume.

performative chronotopes into the texts.[35] Such chronotopes contribute not only to the dialogic aspects of the novels but also to their *amphoteroglossia*. The performative dynamism inherent in these intervallic chronotopes allows the authors to assimilate elements of their contemporary world into their narratives and to involve their audiences in playful responses to current cultural conventions, thus enhancing the "worldliness" of their literary products. This active, albeit at times overly subtle, complicity between authors and audiences is, I argue, an important dimension of the "consumption" of the Komnenian novels in their synchronic contexts, all the more since some form of aural reception of these works in the performative space of rhetorical theaters does not seem to be improbable.[36]

A telling case in point is the performance of the clown Satyrion in Theodore Prodromos' novel. I have discussed this episode extensively elsewhere;[37] here I would like to center upon some key observations. The scene to which Satyrion's performative interval belongs constitutes a complex interdiscursive space that incorporates diverse, synchronic and inherited, literary and broader cultural intertexts.[38] Ceremonial rituals, court poetry, rhetoric, mime, religious poetry, even culinary art are integrated into a multilayered whole that activates the hermeneutic involvement of the novel's contemporary (medieval) audience along two axes: the transhistorical (paradigmatic) axis of (both ancient Greek and Christian) literary tradition, and the synchronic (syntagmatic) one of refined allusions to Byzantine *realia*. Satyrion enters this intervallic space after the performance of a culinary marvel at the court of Mistylos, the leader of the pirates who have arrested the two protagonists. The incident, which echoes similar marvels at the Byzantine court especially on occasions of diplomatic

35 For the concept of intervallic, i.e. theatrical chronotopes in general, see Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, pp. 165–66. (Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dialogic imagination*, pp. 84–258 describes "chronotope" as the underlying structure of time and space in a given narrative).

36 I discuss these performative aspects of the Komnenian novels in Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 245–300; for a methodological discussion of the oral/aural aspects of the transmission and reception of medieval literature in general, see Roilos, "Oral Literature". Marciniak, "Byzantine *Theatron*" is a general outline of previous research on "rhetorical theater" in Byzantium.

37 Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 253–88.

38 The concept of interdiscursivity, with regard to literature and other complex cultural phenomena with special emphasis on ancient Greek societies, has been proposed by Dimitrios Yatromanolakis; see Yatromanolakis/Roilos, *Toward a Ritual Poetics*, ch. 2; Yatromanolakis, *Sappho in the Making*; id., "Genre Categorie"; id., "Ancient Greek Popular Song"; id., *Greek Mythologies*.

rivalry,[39] becomes the subject of Gobryas' rhetorical sophistry, which alludes also to themes employed in hymnography on the Nativity.[40]

The appearance of Satyrion[41] in Prodromos' novel may very well have alluded also to activities of real clowns and other performers at the Byzantine court and aristocratic houses, as these are attested in 12th-century sources.[42] This probability is reinforced by the fact that Satyrion's performance of a hymn in honor of his master Mistylos bears distinctive similarities with conventions of contemporary Byzantine court poetry, a genre in which Prodromos himself had invested a considerable part of his literary career.[43] Through Gobryas's and Satyrion's performances the narrative chronotope of Prodromos' fiction, which is situated in a generic pagan past, is thus expanded to include allusions to synchronic sociocultural contexts. This interdiscursive process, which was

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39 Liutprand of Cremona, who visited the Byzantine court as an envoy in the mid- and late 10th century, describes such technological marvels in the *Antapodosis* 6.5 (transl. P. Squatriti, *The Complete Works of Liutprand of Cremona* [Medieval texts in Translation], Washington, DC 2007, pp. 197–98); see also Constantine Porphyrogennetus, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. J. Reiske, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, Bonn 1829/1830, vol. 1, pp. 566–70. For the political manipulation of mechanical wonders, see Trilling, "Daedalus and the Nightingale". The culinary marvel in Prodromos' novel intriguingly recalls a similar incident in Petronius' *Cena Trimalchionis*; see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 260–61.

40 See Prodromos' commentaries on the hymns of John of Damascus and Kosmas Melodos, ed. H. Stevenson, *Theodori Prodromi Commentarii in carmina sacra melodorum Cosmae Hyerosolymitani et Ioannis Damasceni*, Rome 1888.

41 Satyrion is also the name of the jester in Lucian *Symposium* 19. Theodore Prodromos also wrote several "Lucianic" dialogues. Significantly, the genre of the novel was resuscitated in a period in which satire was also systematically cultivated; see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 235–38. An important 12th-century satirical text (*Ananias* or *Anacharsis*) has been attributed to another Komnenian novelist, Niketas Eugenianos (the text is available in D.A. Christides, *Μαρκιανὰ Ἀνέκδοτα 1. Ἀνάχαρσις ἢ Ἀνανίας 2. Ἐπιστολὲς – Σιγίλλιο*, Thessaloniki 1984, pp. 203–90). Several 11th- and 12th-century satirical texts are now conveniently available in R. Romano, *La satira bizantina dei secoli XI–XV*, Turin 1999.

42 In his treatise *On Those Who Insult Providence because of Their Poverty* (*Patrologia graeca* 133.1293–1294A), Theodore Prodromos refers to the existence of similar performers in his contemporary Byzantium. Another 12th-century novelist, Constantine Manasses, composed a rather detailed *ekphrasis* of a jester, an unusually short midget, at the Byzantine court (text in Ch. Messis/I. Nilsson, "Constantin Manassès, La Description d'un petit homme: introduction, texte, traduction et commentaires", *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 65 [2015], 169–94).

43 A detailed reconstruction of comparable synchronic performative contexts and conventions is provided in Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 257–88.

activated also in other Komnenian novels,[44] invested *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* with additional generic modulations, most notably comical, parodic, and perhaps satirical ones, which, like the allegorical modulations in other novels, would motivate a dynamic response on the part of its contemporary audience.

Those works' performative chronotopes (which accommodate not only comical events but also dancing and lyrical singing)[45] may be viewed as subtle meta-performative commentaries on the possible occasions on which those works were intended or expected to be received by their contemporary audiences. Literary gatherings can be viewed as likely performative contexts for the aural reception of the novels not only by the authors' possible patrons but also by other literati. The sophisticated rhetoricity of those compositions; their allusive response to different revered examples of pagan and sacred literature; instances of refined intertextual dialogues among themselves; and indirect references to synchronic social, cultural, and literary developments indicate that "informed" recipients may have been counted among those who would frequent such literary gatherings or, at any rate, among those whom the novelists would have envisaged as members of their original audience. Produced in an era marked by a fervent literary creativity, which often resulted in intense intellectual antagonism,[46] the Komnenian novels – invested as they were with a great deal of cultural capital – were probably intended for consumption by the most eminent social and intellectual agents of the active cultural market of 12th-century Constantinople.

44 Especially in Eugenianos' novel, where allusions to sanctioned texts of the Christian tradition (Psalms and the *Song of Songs*) are combined with instances of provocative humor; see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 288–300, and next footnote.

45 See e.g. Nausikrates' dance in Prodromos' novel. In *Drosilla and Charikles*, Barbition, whose name echoes *barbitos* (the ancient stringed instrument, on the cultural connotations of which, see Yatromanolakis, *Sappho in the Making*, chapter 2), is the embodiment of musical performance in that text (3, 255–322); similar instances include Kleandros' singing in 2, 320–385, singing, dancing, and the exchange of playful, satirical poems at a feast in honor of Dionysos (3, 119–254; 3, 323–338). Most intricate among these performative events in Eugenianos' novel are the "Bacchanal" dance and appalling song of the old woman Baryllis (7, 265–315). In *Hysmine and Hysminias*, performances are of a less provocative nature and take place also at banquets; see Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 288–96; on Nausikrates, ibid., pp. 247–52; on banquets, ibid., pp. 238–301.

46 For intellectual antagonism in 12th-century Byzantium, see Garzya "Literarische und Rhetorische Polemiken".

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CHAPTER 19

"Let me tell you a wonderful tale": Audience and Reception of the Vernacular Romances

Carolina Cupane

The issues of the modes of reception and the possible or intended audience are of paramount importance when analysing literary discourse. However, while the context of production and reception in modern literature is usually well-known, therefore making a social mapping possible and meaningful, the same doesn't apply to the medieval era. This is particularly true with regard to Byzantine vernacular poetry, the bulk of which has been anonymously handed down in post-Byzantine manuscripts. Unlike Western medieval literature, we know neither authors, nor addressees of Byzantine vernacular texts, nor can their late manuscript tradition shed light on the originary reception context. The only exceptions to this rule are, to the best of my knowledge, the poems of *Poor Prodromos* (*Ptochoprodromos*) in the 12th century, which are, at least partially, written in the vernacular and are dedicated to the emperors or other members of the Komnenian family, and possibly performed in court milieu.[1]

Concerning the rest of Byzantine literary production, only receivers of high-brow rhetorical works, – e. g. letters, imperial orations, occasional poetry – at least from the 11th century onward, as well as the audience of the 12th century verse love romances, may be identified with some certainty.[2]

On the other hand, liturgical and moralizing texts as well as homilies and especially saints' lives, written in a less demanding register (in the so-called *koine*)[3] and plain style, were accessible to a wider audience. In few cases specific receivers can be detected, for it seems that several *Bioi* (Lives) of saints were written to be read out aloud in monasteries for a very small audience of monks or nuns.[4] However, they certainly didn't remain the only ones. On the

1 Ed. Eideneier, *Ptochoprodromos* 1991 und 2012; literary aspects of the poems are analysed by Beaton, "Rhetoric of Poverty"; on the performative nature s. Alexiou, "Ploys of Performance".

2 On the audience of the Komnenian love novels, and more generally of high-brow rhetoric literature, s. the contributions by P. Roilos and I. Nilsson in the present volume pp. 463–79 and 39–66 respectively.

3 On the issue s. Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Koine und Diglossie*.

4 Some examples are to be found by Kalogeras, "The Role of the Audience"; on audience and reception of hagiographic texts generally, s. the overview by Efthymiadis/Kalogeras, "Audience, Language and Patronage".

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contrary, we can safely assume that educated people too delighted both in reading or listening to these edifying tales.[5]

The picture, so far, is clear: highbrow, rhetorical literature addressed (although not exclusively) the few educated ones, whereas texts written in the *koine* were open for wider utilization. The rise, from the 12th century onwards, of vernacular literature came to disturb this clear-cut distinction. Was the audience of such literary production different from the two above-mentioned groups? Was that literature actually produced and intended for circulation among the lower social strata? Are we, therefore, allowed to speak in this case of "folk literature"?[6]

Vernacular texts in fact display features that somehow set them apart from the learned ones: 1. They are normally transmitted anonymously. 2. A considerable gap can be ascertained between their date of composition and the time of their written transmission. 3. All of them are poetic works using the same fifteen-syllable verse (also called political verse = *politichos stichos*) and are actually composed in a sort of mixed language that incorporates vernacular and learned elements, and abounds with repetitions and formulaic expressions. 4. Last but not least, they do not represent fixed texts; there are rather different versions of a given story characterized by a high spectrum of linguistic variation in diction as well as in morphology.

The question arises as to whether such an obvious "otherness" of those texts necessary implies an entirely different audience and mode of reception, all the more since the very features mentioned above, and, most notably, the dazzling variety of meaningful textual variants seem to suggest that at least some of the extant manuscripts may be later transcripts of orally transmitted poetry.[7]

Epic Poetry: *Digenis Akritis*

When discussing the issue of orality vs. literacy in the medieval Greek literature the focus has mainly been on epic, which is traditionally believed to be an essentially oral genre. In Byzantium, epic is only represented by the poem *Digenis Akritis* which in its second part recounts life and exploits of the

5 On the interaction between folk- and high culture concerning every day religious life s. the brief but insightful remarks of Roilos, "Oral Literature", pp. 231–32 and n. 22; as for the conscious use of different levels of styles to match the needs of different receivers s. Hunger "Stilstufen"; Ševčenko, "Levels of Style".

6 On this issue, see Cupane, "Wie volkstümlich", esp. pp. 577–81.

7 For these issues s. indicatively Jeffreys, "Traditional Style"; Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "Byzantine Popular Poetry"; Eideneier, "Leser- oder Hörerkreis".

eponymous hero, and, in the first one, the story of his parents. Surviving in different versions dating from the 12th to the 17th centuries, the poem has often been connected to oral songs, now lost, that celebrated the heroic deeds of Byzantine warriors against the Muslims at the borders (*akrai*, hence *akrites*) of the empire at the time of the Arab-Byzantine conflict (8th–10th centuries). Even though the supposed existence of a song cycle on "akritic" subjects, which would have been the immediate source of the poem, has been shown to be nothing but a scholarly construction, *Digenis* does, in fact, indicate acquaintance with oral literary tradition.[8] The anonymous poet drew from it several themes that could be defined as mythical – such as the mother's curse, the youngest son's key role, the abduction of the bride, the slaying of the dragon – themes that still survive in the folk poetry of modern Greece. Be that as it may, the poem's literary dimension cannot be challenged. All the extant versions, even the "folk-like" E, and especially the well-structured G (both most probably originally composed in the 12th century) as well as the later rewritings (15th–17th centuries)[9] display clear hints at the Hellenistic love romance, which was about to be reactivated as a genre in contemporary learned literature.[10]

The texts themselves seek thus explicitly to relate their own story to the learned classical tradition by confronting it to the Homeric poems which are supposed to be untrustworthy. The same applies to the oral epic tradition celebrating the deeds of the *apelatai* (bandits), which the redactor of G locates on the opposite pole of the literary continuum. Both the classical and the oral folk poetry he declares to be inferior to his own truthful poem:

> Cease writing of Homer and the legends of Achilles
> And likewise of Hector: these are false
> [.....]
> As for old Philopappous, Kinnamos and Ioannakis,
> It is not at all worth recounting stories about them:
> For they have boasted but achieved nothing.[11]

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8 On this issue, see the well-balanced analysis by Beaton, "Digenis Akrites and Modern Greek Folk Song".

9 On the different versions of the poem, see the useful overview by Jeffreys, "The Afterlife".

10 On ancient romance and its Byzantine revival s. the contributions of M. Fusillo und I. Nilsson respectively in the present volume; on *Digenis*' connections to the contemporary literature Magdalino, "Digenis Akrites"; Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, pp. XLII-XLIX as well the contribution of C. Jouanno in this volume, pp. 260–84.

11 *Digenis Akritis, Version G* IV 27–28. 33–35, ed. Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, p. 68: Παύσασθε γράφειν Ὅμηρον καὶ μύθους Ἀχιλλέως / ὡσαύτως καὶ τοῦ Ἕκτορος, ἅπερ εἰσὶ ψευδέα / [...] Φιλοπαπποῦ τοῦ γέροντος, Κιννάμου καὶ Ἰωαννάκη / οὐδ᾽ὅλως ἔστιν ἄξιον τὰ αὐτῶν

A scholium by the learned metropolitan of Caesarea, Arethas (9th–10th centuries) indeed attests to the fact that, at his time, "wandering minstrels" put together songs about the deeds of famous men and went from house to house singing them for money.[12] One such song celebrating a lone hero of Arab-Byzantine ancestry could well have provided the framework of the *Digenis* tale. This initial story was then taken over by an educated poet, who enriched and fashioned it according to traditional literary rules. By comparing itself with both the written and the oral tradition, the poem proves to be – as the hero whose deeds it celebrates – a "*di-genis*" (two-origin) product sharing elements with both the literary and the oral tradition, albeit neither of the two is deemed by the poet to be an authority.[13] Rather, his creation is presented as something new, lying in a kind of no man's land located between the two opposite poles. As in the case of the hero himself, the poem's superiority seems to arise from the blending of contrasting elements: it is just the right mixture that produces its value as well as its truthfulness.

Which primary audience *Digenis* was addressed to? Who were the people, who most probably would listen to the performance of such an unusual (for established Byzantine standards) piece of literature? The poem does not offer any hints as to its intended receivers, nor is the moment of public performance in front of a fictional audience (which might have reflected the real one) represented in the work, as it was the case in Western epic and will be later in Byzantine vernacular romances as well.[14] Nevertheless, at least as far as the G-Version is concerned, it is safe to assume that the primary audience of the original composition is to be found not far away from the same court milieu where the emperor (Manuel I Komnenos) could be addressed to as the new Digenis.[15]

καταλέγειν· / οὗτοι γὰρ ἐκαυχήσαντο μηδὲν πεποιηκότες; in E (718–722, ed. Jeffreys, p. 292) the reference to the oral tradition about the *apelatai* is lacking, which may perhaps indicate the poet's more positive stance towards the world of the frontier epic: s. Rizzo Nervo, "Storia e Fiction"; cf. ead., *Dighenis Akritis*, pp. 41–44. – As to the topic of fictionality vs historical truth in *Digenis* s. Cupane, "Una passeggiata", pp. 63–68; for a different understanding see Agapitos, "Fiction and Fictionality", pp. 268–76.

12 S. Beaton, *Folk Poetry*, p. 77; for further external references concerning singers s. Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "Byzantine Popular Poetry", pp. 507–9.

13 This would have been the case for the Western oral epic tradition whose authority was never challenged in the Middle Ages; s. indicatively Duggan, "Medieval Epic".

14 Some examples from both Western and Byzantine romances can be found in Agapitos, "Fiction and Fictionality", pp. 296–311; cf. Cupane, "Leggere", pp. 86–91.

15 In the fourth poem of *Poor Prodromos* the poet calls emperor Manuel I Komnenos "a new Akrites" (*Ptochoprodromos*, IV 544–45, ed. Eideneier, pp. 168–69: τὸν νέον τὸν Ἀκρίτην).

This is not to say, of course, that this and other versions of the poem never reached wider circles. G itself, for example, is handed down together with one version of the moralizing poem *Spaneas* in a manuscript written in South Italy at the end of the 13th century. The fact that a folio had been torn out of it, removing a morally indecent seduction scene, may suggest that the manuscript was used in a local clerical milieu. The E codex, in turn, was written in 15th-century Crete and may therefore reflect the literary taste and expectations of the island's bourgeois audience. The Byzantine court culture and milieu are, in fact, completely outside the horizon of the E version. It is certainly no coincidence that the ideologically charged meeting of Digenis with the emperor is not featured in that version. The poem's later (17th century) rewritings in prose and rhymed political verse (both produced on the island Chios) were seemingly considered suitable for a learned clerical audience, since the rhymed version (penned by the monk Ignatios Petritzes) was dedicated to a high church official.[16]

The Romances

Romance, more than any other genre, is rooted in writtenness and would even be almost unthinkable without writing.[17] Byzantine vernacular romances are no exception. They, too, were conceived, realized, and handed down in writing, as their narrative structure at the macro-level and rhetorical stylisation at the micro-level suggest. Furthermore, the great majority of the vernacular romances leave no doubt as to their own textuality by explicitly stating their status as written texts. At the same time, these very romances pretend to be oral tales, recited aloud to a listening audience, thus reenacting in fictional terms the actual conditions of their possible oral transmission and performance.[18] Prologues and/or epilogues are usually the privileged places for an author to make metanarrative statements about his own function as a narrator and about his intended receivers. He usually does this by the means of direct addresses to the audience.

16 On Digenis late rewritings s. Kechagioglou, "Digenes Akrites in Prose".

17 On this issue s. indicatively Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix*, pp. 295–322.

18 S. Ridder, "Fiktionalität und Medialität" with examples from medieval chivalric romances, as well as Schäfer, "Hearing from Books", 124–36 on old-english poetry; cf. Haug, "Mündlichkeit, Schriftlichkeit". As for the relation between fiction and reality, s. below, pp. 485–87

Come! Attend a moment all you young people.
I wish to tell you the fairest tale,
an astonishing and highly varied story.[19]

The authorial narrator of *Velthandros and Chrysantza* assumes the role of a singer of tales and addresses a young audience, offering them an exciting adventure tale and stirring their interest by providing first a short summary. No mention of writing and reading whatsoever is to be found in *Velthandros*, which thus sustains the impression of an exclusively oral delivery. However, this could be due to the fact that the romance, as we have it (in a later, early 15th-century version), underwent a shortening, by which all the metanarrative interventions were omitted.[20]

Composition and societal affiliation of the audience, on the contrary, remain undefined. Nevertheless, the young people fond of heroic tales are strongly reminiscent of the hero's opponent in the romance *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*. The author (probably Andronikos Palaiologos, a nephew of the emperor Michael VIII) describes Kallimachos' rival as "single, unmarried, entirely free, fond of hunting, brave deeds, and martial prowess ... a voracious, appreciative listener, he loved stories about foreign countries, wonders and war exploits".[21] To what extent the fictional speaker and the listeners that the poet constructed in his text can actually be paralleled to real byzantine story-tellers and listeners at that time, is difficult to determine.[22] Be that as it may, the image of a public performance the author/narrator created corresponds to the information provided by medieval sources about public performances of learned literature, and can actually reflect actual contemporary practices.[23] Furthermore, the literary image itself, as we shall see below, is consistent.

19 *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, 1–3. 23–24, ed. Cupane, pp. 228–30: Δεῦτε, προσκαρτερήσατε μικρόν, ὦ νέοι παντες! / Θέλω σᾶς ἀφηγήσασθαι λόγους ὡραιοτάτους, / ὑπόθεσιν παράξενην, πολλὰ παρηλλαγμένην·/. On this prologue see Cupane, "Una passeggiata", pp. 78–81; for another view, Agapitos, "Fiction and Fictionality", pp. 310–13.

20 S. Agapitos, *Narrative structure*, pp. 50–51; Id., "Writing, Reading and Reciting", pp. 152–54.

21 *Kallimachos und Chrysorrhoe*, 852–54. 859.60, ed. Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi*, pp. 110–12: Ἄλλ᾽ ἦτον ἄζυξ, ἄγαμος, ἐλεύθερος καθόλου, / μόνον πρὸς κυνηγέσια καὶ πρὸς ἀνδραγαθίας / καὶ πρὸς πολέμων συμπλοκὰς ἀκράτητος ὑπῆρχεν. [...] Ἤρχετο λέγειν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὅστις πολλάκις εἶδεν / χώρας, πολέμους, θαύματα, ξενόχρους ἀφηγήσεις, / ἦτον ἐν τούτοις, ἔχαιρεν.

22 S. Hanning, "The Audience as Co-Creator" (on the audience of chivalric romances); on fictionalisation of narrator and audience s. indicatively Schäfer, "Individualität und Fiktionalität", pp. 60–66; Haug, "Mündlichkeit, Schriftlichkeit und Fiktionalität", cf. Scholz, *Hören und Lesen*; id., "Zur Hörerfiktion".

23 On this s. above, p. 479, and n. 1–3.

The prologue of *Livistros and Rodamne* begins with an address to the audience, pronounced by the intrafictive narrator Klitovos who recounts the story of his friend Livistros at the imaginary court of Litavia, thus staging, as in *Velthandros*, a situation of public recitation, albeit inside the fictional world.[24] The use of verbs of speaking and listening (ἀφηγοῦμαι, ἀκούω) as well as the presence of several deictic terms – as come with me (ἄς ἔλθῃ μετ᾿ἐμέν), now (τώρα), today (σήμερον)[25] – and the address to the audience support the reenactment of a public performance at court. The intended audience, in turn, is wider that that in *Velthandros*, for the listeners appear to be scattered through the whole social spectrum, ranging from the queen herself with her relatives and court officials to the lowest classes. This, of course, should not be taken literally, for it is a *topos*, simply underlining the intended universality of the message. What is more, although all men are summoned, the tale essentially addresses more qualified people, in this case those who have already experienced love's pain and have a compassionate heart. These are indeed important prerequisites for the prospective audience of a love story, just as youthful curiosity and boldness are needed to enjoy a chivalric adventure story: the tale has to match the audience, as already ancient narrative knew.[26]

As in the case of *Velthandros*, we cannot conclusively prove that the fictional court-associated audience pictured in *Livistros* actually reflects the social environment of the real originary audience of the romance. Nevertheless, internal elements, such as its rhetorical and stylistic sophistication, as well as the highly complex narrative structure and the obvious reminiscences of the ancient and learned narrative tradition do imply educated receivers who were able to recognize and enjoy such artfulness.[27]

So far, the picture one gets from the prologues of the vernacular romances is one of consistent orality: a tale reaches its audience exclusively through the storyteller's live voice; there is no mention at all of writing or of reading from a book. The world of literacy seems indeed far removed from the horizon of the vernacular romances. However, when analysing the texts themselves and especially the epilogues, one faces a different situation.

24 *Livistros und Rodamne*, *Redaction α*, 2–10. 13–17. 20, ed. Agapitos, p. 257; on this passage, see the chapter on the original romances by C. Cupane in the present volume, p. 102.

25 On such oral formulas strategically placed at the very beginning of a poem s. Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix*, p. 231; Schäfer, "Hearing from books", pp. 126–28.

26 This is indeed a time-honored *topos*, already documented in ancient erotic fiction; see on this issue the chapter by P. Roilos in this volume, pp. 469–70.

27 S. the chapter by C. Cupane in this volume, pp. 101–10.

Writing and reading are actually very prominent in *Livistros*. First, in the realm of Eros that the hero enters in a vision, he finds various inscriptions on buildings, statues and paintings which inform him about the meaning of what he sees and which he duly reads. Later in the story, when Livistros eventually arrives at the castle of Princess Rodamne he has no other means to communicate with her in order to declare his love than through letters. These letters are all written by the very hand of the sender and read, most probably privately, by the addressee. No doubt, the anonymous poet conjures up the image of a literate community,[28] thus confirming the picture of a courtly audience drawn in the prologue and reinforcing its possible links with reality.

At the same time, due to the romance structure, both inscriptions and letters are presented as being read aloud, whereby the overall impression of a predominance of the spoken word arises. This impression is further stressed by the presence of four pieces labelled as songs (*tragoudia*) being sung alternately by Rodamne's maids and Livistros' companions. However, the epilogue of the romance which marks a shift back to the frame, re-establishes the balance between written and spoken word, thus giving some indications as to how the real author wanted his work to be understood. After having told the story of his friend Livistros, Klitovos, the chief narrating voice in the romance, steps out of the fictional world in which he was acting, and assuming the role of an authorial narrator, addresses the prospective (real?) audience asking for someone to recount his own story, which would also be a kind of sequel to *Livistros* itself:

> Yet, some man who has a soul for such things,
> […] let him tell, write in detail, search, examine carefully.
> Should he not be able to recount all of these facts,
> I say that he should write most of it;
> And, simply, any lover who should wish to describe these events,
> Let him adapt them as he pleases and desires.[29]

28 On the role and significance of writing and reading in the romance see Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting", pp. 129–33; s. also Agapitos, "Ἀφηγηματικὴ σημασία"; Cupane, "Uno, nessuno, centomila", pp. 452–59.

29 *Livistros and Rodamne* 4594–601, ed. Agapitos, p. 432: Ὅμως ὁκάτις ἄνθρωπος ἔχων ψυχὴν εἰς τοῦτο, / […] εἰπῇ, συγγράψῃ μερικῶς, γυρέψῃ, ψηλαφήσῃ. / Καὶ κἂν τὰ πάντα οὐ δυνηθῇ τὸ νὰ τὸ καταλέξῃ, / τούτων τὰ περισσότερα λέγω νὰ τὰ συγγράψῃ· / καὶ εἴτις ἁπλῶς ἐρωτικὸς θελήσῃ νὰ τὰ ἐκφράσῃ, / ὡς θέλει καὶ ὀρέγεται νὰ τὰ μετασκευάσῃ (translation by Agapitos, "Fiction and Fictionality", p. 307).

The wording of the epilogue recalls that of the prologue, since they both address primarily sensitive people who have experienced the pain of love. However, while the first creates the impression of a purely oral process, the second makes it clear that the real author could not imagine the prospective tale other than in written form, as a *syngrafe* (συγγραφή). While nothing is said about the modus through which the written text would reach the intended audience, the consistent use of verbs of hearing and telling (tell: εἰπεῖν; tell, sing: καταλέγειν; hear: ἀκούω) in all the versions of the romance[30] conjures up the impression of a public reading from a book in front of listeners.

The interplay between telling and writing, hearing and reading is also featured in the *Achilleid.* The prologue presents the narration as a written process[31] and, as it was the case in *Livistros*, love letters between the lovers are exchanged and quoted verbatim by the authorial narrator (and not recited aloud by the protagonists themselves). Nevertheless, verbs of speaking and hearing are very prominent and, again, following the same pattern as *Livistros* love songs are performed.[32] On the other hand, the authorial narrator in the epilogue lays particular emphasis on the written status of his tale that – as he proudly declares – he extracted out of ancient books (Homer, Aristoteles and Plato are mentioned), reworked, and linguistically simplified in order to make it understandable to uneducated people. Having said that, the narrator explicitly invites his readers (ἀναγινώσκοντες) to become aware of the moral and didactic message that the text conveys.[33]

Here the authorial narrator evokes a context of traditional education, most probably with the view of conferring a classical touch on its otherwise highly unclassical story. This could, at the same time, explain the plain reference to readers normally missing, as already mentioned, in the great majority of the romances.

30 On the versions of *Livistros*, s. Agapitos, *Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου καὶ Ροδάμνης*, pp. 198–233; s. also the chapter by C. Cupane in this volume, p. 119.

31 *Achilleid*, 3, ed. Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi*, p. 324 (= ed. Smith, p. 15): Καὶ τί νὰ εἰπῶ τὸν Ἔρωτα, πῶς νὰ τὸν ὀνομάσω; / Καὶ πῶς νὰ γράψω τὰς ἀρχάς, τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἔχει (how should I tell about Eros, how should I call him? / How should I write about his beginnings, the strength he has?); on this passage s. Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting", pp. 158–59. Admittedly, γράφω (write) could here also be understood metaphorically as "describe" (in whatever form).

32 *Achilleid*, 1290–94 and 1540–46 ed. Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi*, pp. 410 and 424 (= 1377–81; 1628–34, ed. Smith, pp. 57 and 65, respectively).

33 *Achilleid*, vv. 1798–805. 1810–11 (ed. Cupane, pp. 440–42 = 1902–909. 1914–15, ed. Smith, p. 74). On such references to classical authors and their presence in other vernacular texts, see the chapter by R. Lavagnini in the present volume.

Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe – which, according to a contemporary witness, may well have been written by Andronikos Palaeologos, a nephew of Emperor Michael VIII[34] – is the only romance that consciously gives up the fictitious representation of an oral discourse, in that it constantly presents the narration as a written, poetic text (γραφή, στίχος). Furthermore, the authorial narrator explicitly refers to the prospective receivers of the story as readers, whose needs he has to take into account, for instance by pretending to shorten the narration in order not to weary them, or, on the contrary, by giving more details so as to make the plot more perspicuous. In the prologue, however, the narrator does not directly address the intended audience as in *Velthandros* and the *Achilleid*, nor does he depict it fictionally as in *Livistros*. Moreover, nothing is said about the social status of the readers referred to in the authorial interventions. Nevertheless, if the authorship of Andronikos Palaiologos, which is more than plausible, is to be accepted, then we can assume that the text was as court-oriented as the three aforementioned romances.

Coming back to the intended mode of reception, the emphasis given to the written status of the story certainly does not mean that vocality has been entirely withdrawn. On the contrary, the author-narrator is fully aware of the fact that narrating and describing affect both hand and tongue:

> Now, the pleasures of the bath and the delights found therein,
> Can only be told by the **tongue** of **Aphrodite**.
> A **human and mortal hand holding a pen**
> Would not have the power to **tell and write** about such pleasures.[35]

Unlike Agapitos,[36] I believe that in the author-narrator's view tongue and hand, telling and writing all together are involved, each in its own rights, in the act of narrating. Far from expressing opposite notions, they are, rather, complementary concepts, equally indispensable in order to produce a good story.

The narrator of *Kallimachos* is not alone in this view. The authorial narrative voice in the *Achilleid* shares the same opinion: tongue (γλῶσσα), hand (χείρ) and mind (λογισμός) are the necessary prerequisites for producing an accomplished narration/description:

34 On this topic s. the contribution by C. Cupane in the present volume, pp. 95–96 and 114–15.

35 *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, 771–74, ed. Cupane, p. 104: Καὶ τοῦ λουτροῦ τὰς ἡδονὰς καὶ τὰς ἐν τούτῳ χάρεις / ἡ **γλῶσσα** μόνη δύνεται **τῆς Ἀφροδίτης λέγειν· / χεὶρ δ᾽ ἀνθρωπίνη** καὶ θνητὴ καὶ **κάλαμος** ἐν ταύτῃ / **λέγειν καὶ γράφειν** ἡδονὰς τοσαύτας οὐκ ἰσχύσει (translated and commented upon by Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting", p. 156).

36 Ibid.

> Which **tongue** could describe it in detail?
> My **intellect**, **hands** and **tongue** fail
> At **writing a description** of the bath.[37]

Such interplay of tongue and hand characterized not only Byzantine understanding of the production of narrative. This very word combination was also extremely widespread both in late antique and in other medieval cultures, perfectly expressing the substantial unity of the acts of writing and telling at that time. A writer/author usually dictated to himself or to another, thus pronouncing loudly what he intended to write. *Lingua et manus*, are therefore two sides of the same coin and must not be separated or analysed independently of one another,[38] for medieval narrative discourse was always (and remained at least until the late 15th century)[39] both a written **and** oral process.

Surely composed in writing, as the majority of the texts themselves clearly state, the romances (and other kinds of literary products as well) were in fact soon to return to their aural[40] destination, being voiced again in performance. Although witnesses of performances of purely entertaining, vernacular literature are lacking, there is no doubt that such performances were staged. Moreover, it cannot be excluded (although not proved) that recitation, as in the case of *Livistros* and *Achilleid* – where love songs are referred to and quoted verbatim – and may-be also *Digenis* – where a sing-performance is staged as well[41] – was sometimes accompanied, in reality too, by music and perhaps also dance.[42]

That is not to say that in Byzantium private readers did not exist and books were not intended to be read. It is obvious that, once written, books were

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37 *Achilleid* 778–80, ed. Cupane, *Romanzi cavallereschi*, pp. 376–78 (= 834–36, ed. Smith, pp. 40–41), s. also 716–17 (ed. Cupane, p. 372 = 768–69, ed. Smith, p. 38) and 795–99 (ed. Cupane, p. 378 = 851–55, ed. Smith, p. 41); on the passage s. Agapitos, "Writing, Reading", p. 159. Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "Byzantine Popular Poetry", p. 521 understand the interplay between "tell" and "write", "tongue" and "hand" as a «confusion …[only possible] at a time of transition».

38 S. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading*, pp. 16. 148; Id., "Terminologische Überlegungen", pp. 4–5.

39 Coleman, *Public Reading*, pp. 207–20.

40 I use the terminology proposed by Coleman, *Public Reading*, pp. XI, 2, 27–33, who rightly distinguishes between "orality" (of poetry without any written support) and "aurality" (reading of books aloud to one or more people).

41 *Digenis Akrites, Version G* VI 105–109, ed. Jeffreys, p. 158.

42 For similar performance scenes in the Komnenian novels s. the chapter by P. Roilos in the present volume; cf. id., *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 247–48, 288–301.

always available for private reading and that this opportunity was taken, all the more so in a highly literate society, which the Byzantine certainly was, in comparison to western societies. Moreover, with regard especially to the romances, it is worth noting that an epigram by the polymath Manuel Philes offers a very clear witness for silent, private reading of an erotic book likely to be identified with *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*.[43]

Nevertheless, aurality should actually have been a very popular and widespread mode of reception of literature during the whole of the Byzantine era, regardless of the degree of literacy of the targeted audience. In my opinion, it is neither possible nor suitable to construct an exact timeline of the shift in the mode of reception of narrative vernacular literature from an original public recitation to private silent reading on the basis of the romances.[44] The logic of evolution underlying this assumption does not work in literature, for here the new never fully replaces the old, and co-existence rather than extinction is the rule.[45] Hence the traces of orality present to a minor or major degree in all of the vernacular romances are not to be seen as "oral residues", remains of an oral technique of composition embedded in the written texts, but rather as signals of their own "performative" existence.[46] While the fictionality of both the dramatized performances depicted in some texts and of the narrator himself cannot be denied, this by no means affects the reality of oral delivery, this being the prevailing mode of transmission and reception of literature throughout the Middle Ages and until well into the modern era.

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43 On Philes and his reading of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* see the chapter on "Original romances" by C. Cupane in this volume pp 96–97 and 114–15.

44 This is the opinion of Agapitos, "Writing, Reading", pp. 156–65.

45 I agree with Coleman, *Public Reading*, pp. 16–20, who vehemently argues against such an evolutionary schema.

46 On the theory of "oral residues", see Ong, *Orality and Literacy*.

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